

TORNADO BOY



THOMAS C HINKLE

TORNADO BOY

A HORSE OF THE WEST

By THOMAS C. HINKLE

He was a magnificent colt, with white stocking legs, and Jim McDougal knew when he first saw Tornado Boy on Blazer's Creek that he would grow up to be one smart horse.

All the cowpunchers on the Cumberland Ranch wanted the horse, but Jim made it plain from the beginning that Tornado Boy was his and his alone—that is, until rustlers stole the valiant horse and drove him westward across the range.

From that time on Tornado Boy knew exciting adventure and hairbreadth escapes. You will thrill to how he and his mother Coaly galloped over the wild, desolate plains until they were caught by the half-wit Crazy Barney, who drove them into the desert wasteland; and how they escaped—but not in time for Coaly to survive the terrible experience; and how Tornado Boy went on alone to win a fierce battle with a wild stallion, and later, to face the thundering onrush of a stampeding herd of maddened longhorns.

Once again Thomas Hinkle tells a brilliant story of an unforgettable horse who raced the western plains—Tornado Boy!

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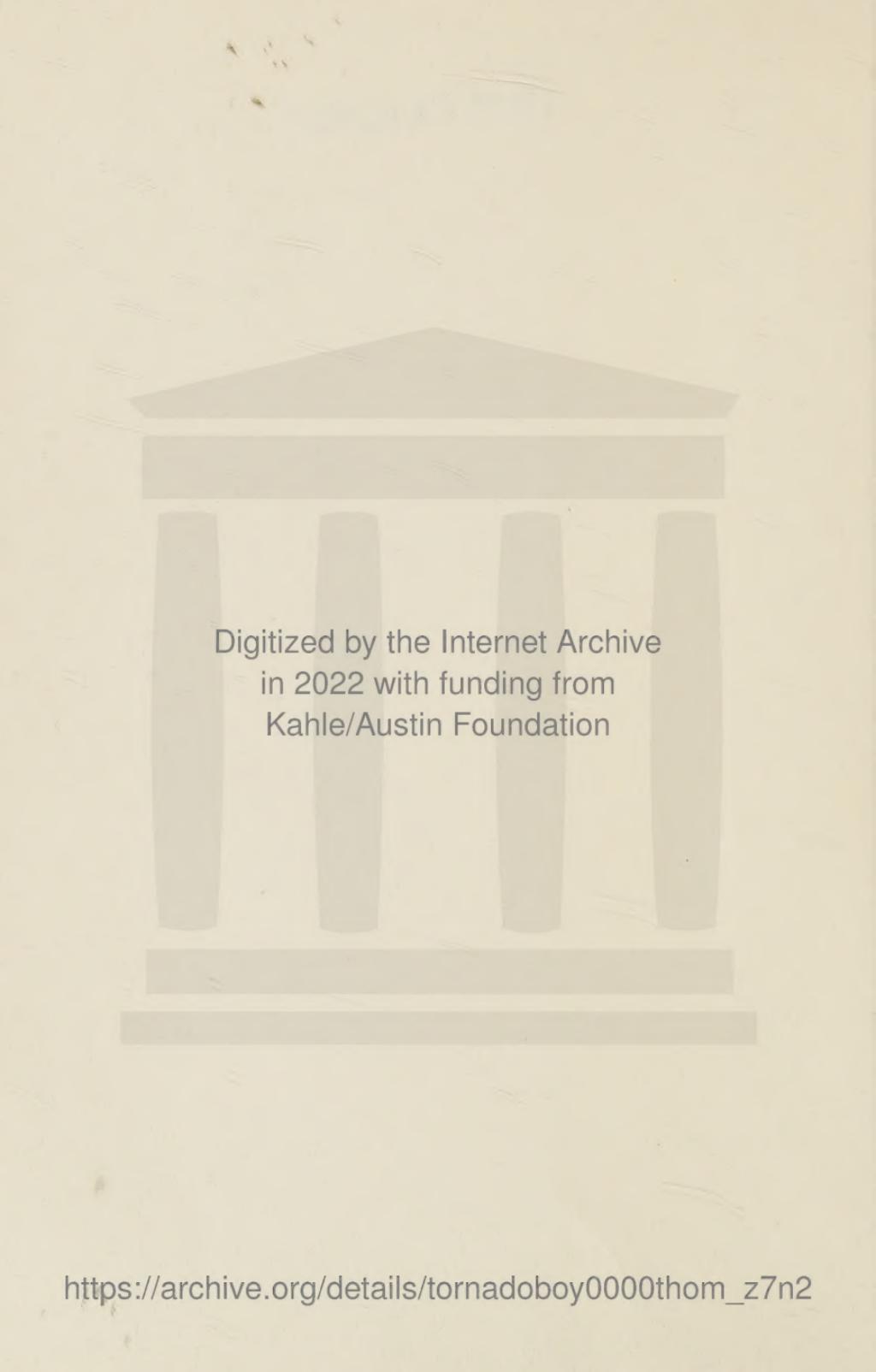
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CHERYL ANN TIENSVOLD



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TORNADO BOY

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TORNADO BOY

A HORSE OF THE WEST

By Thomas C. Hinkle

GROSSET & DUNLAP

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TO
ROXIE

Author's Note

TORNADO Boy, like Black Storm, is based on a real character; and so is Jim McDougal, one of the best trail leaders of the Old West. My own experience with horses over a long period of years on the plains and tales told me by old plainsmen have figured largely in the writing of *Tornado Boy*.

The incident of the great cattle stampede, due to one of the strangest causes ever known on these cattle drives, happened as related. And, likewise, the fearful ice storm came exactly as described—a storm in which hundreds of thousands of Longhorn cattle, together with many horses, lost their lives. The cowboy bridge with its attending incident was also a fact.

I know what it is to lie on a lonely valley of the vanishing Old West at night with many different horses for companions; and I know that horses, like men, may be very different in type yet very likeable.

Black Storm, in the story by that name, was

AUTHOR'S NOTE

a different type from Tornado Boy in that Black Storm fought always against all men, except one. But Tornado Boy fought most of his battles in his own heart while subject to men. And like some fine spirits among men, Tornado Boy was the gentle kind that longed for kindness, and was always shocked and amazed when he asked for bread and men gave him a stone.

It was my privilege to see Tornado Boy when I was but a small boy. The man who owned him said, "Don't be afraid of him. He just wants to look you over." I remember I put my hands on his head as he reached down to me and even though I was but a boy there was something about his big dark eyes that made me feel he had so much sense that I need not be afraid of him. I remember he held very still and closed his eyes as I felt the thrill of the velvet touch of his nose and listened to the men stand and talk about him.

After all, there was so much in common in those days between men and that noble four-footed creature that now belongs to the vanishing race of horses.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I hope and believe my story will bring up fond memories to old horsemen, and, likewise, I hope and believe that my younger readers, although far removed from those wild days of drama on the plains, will, nevertheless, sense, when they have laid the story down, that they have known one of the truest and noblest of horses in Tornado Boy.

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TORNADO BOY

Chapter I

JIM MC DOUGAL AND TORNADO BOY

THE little blue colt stood in the green valley that spring morning and looked with deep wonder on the strange world he had so recently entered. He had been born early that night and it was not yet quite noon. Even in his infant awkwardness his color was strikingly beautiful. He was a blue colt with white stocking legs, the white reaching to his knees on three legs while the right front leg was white nearly to his body. These markings, together with a long, white spot on the left side of his neck, distinguished him so positively that, once he was seen and known, there could be no mistakes as to his identity.

Old Coaly, his big, black, patient mother all at once felt thirst and, followed by her baby, she started slowly toward the river only a short distance to the south. The little colt came sprawling behind her, managing his long legs as if they were some kind of awk-

TORNADO BOY

ward stilts, which they were to him at this time.

Old Coaly moved steadily on until she came to the river, and after walking along the bank in some uncertainty for a little, she plunged down the rather steep, sandy slope. The colt followed and stood beside her on the level sand bar below while Old Coaly reached down for a long draught of water.

Her baby put his nose down and as if deeply curious smelled the water, then lifted his head and started walking a little out on a sand bar. He saw something that made him curious. Unfortunately, Old Coaly did not know of his danger and even if she had, perhaps she could not have prevented what happened.

The little colt had not gone more than a dozen paces when his fore legs suddenly went down in the deadly quicksand near the mouth of Blazer's Creek. Frightened, he plunged forward, fell on his side, jerked up one front leg, lunged again, only to feel his hind legs sinking also. Terror-stricken, he fought with

JIM McDUGAL

all his might, all the while uttering frightened cries to Old Coaly for help.

Nickering and calling out her own wild cry of fear for him, Old Coaly came charging forward. But she only floundered near him, and badly frightened, she tore herself out to run first this way and then that on the firm sand of the bar, while mingling her cries of distress with those of her young.

The colt still floundered and tried to struggle with his infant strength, but he could do nothing. He paused, quivering, his breath coming in gasps, and he was so weak he could struggle no more. He, of course, had had no experience whatever with this deadly mixture with its all-pervading slime that gripped harder and surer, once it got hold of its victim. Every year this fearful thing of the river claimed its toll of calves and young heifers. The object that had attracted the little colt's curiosity and led him into danger was the head of a young calf that had stumbled into this treacherous place, only to give up its life.

Old Coaly kept up her frantic movements

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on the sand bar, now and then lunging in the quicksand behind her little one, only to heave desperately to get out again.

At last in one of her plunges she sank so deeply herself that it looked as if both Old Coaly and her colt must perish; but Coaly fought and lunged so hard that she at last got out. She staggered up to the firm sand; and here she stood looking at her trapped baby while she heaved for breath and groaned in her helplessness.

All of a sudden there sounded on the valley above the loud crack of a cattle whip, and presently there came rushing along the upper river bank an obstreperous steer followed by Jim McDougal, the youthful cowman of the Bill Cumberland Ranch.

Three times Jim lashed at the steer in an effort to turn him back, but the creature ran so close to the edge of the river bank that Jim was afraid his horse would cave off. He was about to turn the horse a little away when he suddenly pulled him to a violent stop, and at once spurred down the bank, for he saw what had happened.

JIM McDUGAL

Jim threw himself from his horse, his eyes wide with astonishment as he looked at the head and one front leg of the little blue colt, for this was all that could now be seen of him.

Jim leaped swiftly for some drift at the edge of the bank and began frantically throwing it out on the quicksand near the colt, but now he found Old Coaly constantly in his way. At this moment, came the sounds of galloping horses a little further up the valley. Jim yelled with all his might, and Bill Cumberland, the ranch owner, Bud Gorman, the foreman, and three other cowboys checked their mounts and rode down the river.

"Say, look here!" shouted Jim with his characteristic enthusiasm. "Looky here! Old Coaly's got a colt and look what he's got into!" Jim heaved an armful of drift as he spoke and grunted with his exertion. He didn't need to tell his companions of the range what to do. They had already swung from their horses. One of the men at once took charge of Old Coaly and held her away, while the other men worked to free her little one.

TORNADO BOY

The colt was down so low that it was hard to get him out. And although Bill Cumberland and his cowboys were just as careful as was Jim McDougal, it was Jim who, during the process, kept singing out, "Careful there, Hank! Don't pull too hard on that leg, Bud! Bill, I'm afraid we're pulling him too hard!" Time after time one or more of the cowboys sank through a portion of the driftwood, but at last the little colt was brought upon the firm sand bar to Old Coaly. Jim and the other cowboys stood with their arms around him, for he was too weak to stand alone; at a word from Jim the others took their hands away and Jim eased him down on the sand bar. Now all the men fell to rubbing him and they showed their concern as they worked over him, talking to him with the most encouraging words and praising him for his beautiful color. "He's the very image of his daddy, Old Tornado Boy, that was killed in the stampede last summer," said Jim McDougal, "and we got to call *him* Tornado Boy, too!"

"He's a little beauty," said big Bill Cum-

JIM McDUGAL

berland, patting the newly christened Tornado Boy's neck.

At last Tornado Boy threw out his front legs. "He wants to get up, boys—let him!" said Jim McDougal, looking fondly on his new possession. Tornado Boy came up standing and looked at the new creatures around him. They got him and Old Coaly to the level valley above, and Tornado Boy stopped and stood looking at the men with deep curiosity. As they came up to him, he flinched a little at every touch, yet he did not try to get away; and time after time Jim McDougal found to his delight that he could put his hands on Tornado Boy's nose, a colt's most sensitive spot, and the little colt would not back away. The men stood so close around Tornado Boy that his mother was crowded out.

Old Coaly kept nickering softly, telling them that she wanted her baby, and Jim, the thoughtful one, pushed him gently toward her. Tornado Boy seemed to remember all at once that he was hungry, and made a dive for Coaly's udder. The men stood watching

TORNADO BOY

him, and Jim McDougal, with a broad grin on his face, began rubbing Tornado Boy while he was nursing.

"What'll you take for him, Jim?" said Bill Cumberland, as if he were serious, and since Jim McDougal owned Old Coaly, he of course owned the little blue colt.

Jim looked quickly and enquiringly into the face of his boss, and, serious though Bill looked, Jim, the keen youth, saw a twinkle in the gray eyes. "You're just fooling, Bill," said Jim with a grin, "but I guess you all know that I wouldn't sell him. Wouldn't even think of it. Why, he's going to be the prettiest horse on the plains and a sensible one, too. Look at his white stocking legs and especially that right front one!"

"He's a little beauty, Jim," said Bud Gorman.

At this moment Bob Hansen, the grizzled freighter from an eastern town, drove up with supplies for the Cumberland ranch, and, this time, for a two weeks' rest for himself and his tired horses. Cumberland and his

JIM McDUGAL

men waited to hear Old Bob's opinion of the colt.

"Look here, Bob!" shouted the youthful Jim McDougal, bubbling over with enthusiasm. "Come and look at my colt!"

Old Bob climbed down and came over to put his hands on the "perty little creature," as he called him, and to make over him in his kindly way. "He is wonderfully marked, Jim," said Old Bob, "that right front leg—all white and his purty white stockings on all the others—the rest of him blue—he's about the purtiest little feller I ever seen! My! Me!" exclaimed Old Bob, stroking the velvet-like hair of little Tornado Boy, "he's so interesting and purty, I got to get my hands on him every day while I'm here. But it's not all his color, boys," continued Old Bob, "he's got the makings of a sensible horse. He's got the head and the eyes—you mark my word—if he lives you and Jim'll find he's got *sense!*"

The men stood looking at the colt and petting him for a time; then Bill Cumberland and Bud Gorman swung into their saddles.

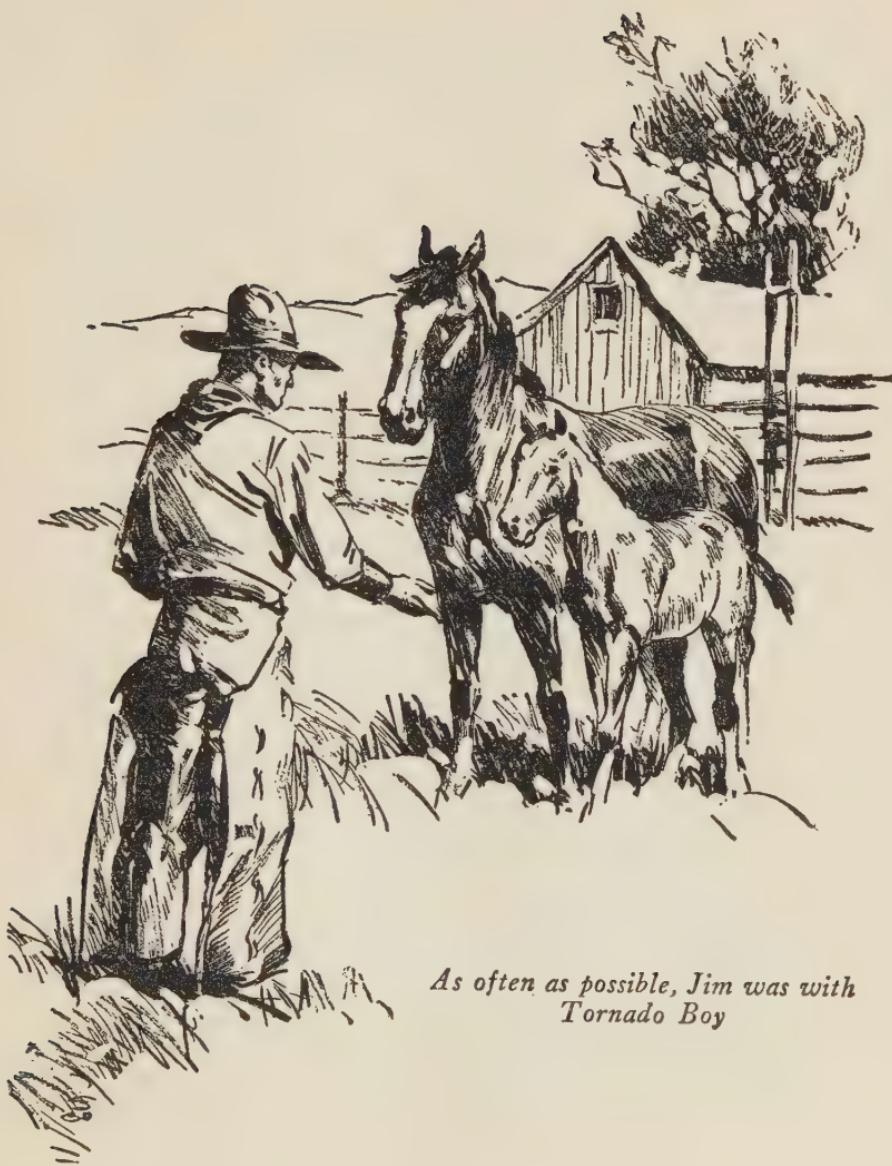
TORNADO BOY

All the other men did likewise, except Jim McDougal.

"I'm going to get Old Coaly up nearer the hills," said Jim; "she can do her drinking in the creek there, where there's no danger." At this he mounted his horse, threw a rope around Old Coaly's neck and started north across the valley toward the hills. Bill Cumberland and the others rode toward the cattle in the east, and old Bob Hansen climbed in his covered wagon and started his slow, plodding horses toward the Cumberland ranch house.

This was the beginning of a two months' companionship between the eighteen-year-old Jim McDougal and Tornado Boy. It was the first colt that Jim had ever owned, and he believed himself of all men most fortunate in his little horse, both for his striking color and for his remarkably lovable disposition. And that Tornado Boy was a lovable colt all the cowmen of Bill Cumberland's ranch could testify before the all too short months had passed.

As often as possible, and this at first was



*As often as possible, Jim was with
Tornado Boy*

JIM McDUGAL

a number of times each day, Jim was with Tornado Boy. And as a rule, one or more of the admiring men were there also. Jim was careful never to tickle him in the flank just to make him kick, as thoughtless men did with other colts. Tornado Boy was, of course, too young to understand all that was done for him, but he did sense that he trusted Jim and liked him very much. Jim, moreover, knew how to increase this desire of Tornado Boy to like him. Bright and early every morning, Jim would ride out with a lump of brown sugar for Tornado Boy, and after a little time Tornado Boy looked forward to this, and as soon as he saw Jim coming, he would gallop to meet him.

Two months of this went by, and one bright moonlight night, while Jim was sleeping on his bunk beside an open window, he was violently startled by a soft nose being thrust in his face. Jim yelled in fright and sat up. The other men sat up also and all laughed when they saw Tornado Boy standing at the window, and heard Jim say, "I was sound asleep and he had his nose right in my face!"

TORNADO BOY

"He wants more sugar, Jim," Bud Gorman laughed.

"Of course," said Jim, grinning sheepishly, "and I'll get him some, too." He rummaged in the cupboard, got the sugar, and holding it out of the window, said, "There now, Tornado Boy, take it and run along—I'll see you in the morning."

The men were soon sound asleep again, and Tornado Boy walked back toward the place where he had left Old Coaly and Speck, another mare, and the few horses standing together in the valley. As he came up Old Coaly nickered for him, and he saw that the other horses were moving toward the northwest. They frequently did this, for there was a good grazing ground up near the creek and beyond the hill ridge—a long distance, however, from the ranch house.

Chapter II

THE COMING OF THE HORSES

IF it happened that the men, riding out to their work in the early morning, did not see the small herd of horses of which Tornado Boy was a member, they supposed they were beyond the ridge, feeding in the lowlands near Blazer's Creek. And sometimes Jim McDougal, busy with the cattle, did not ride beyond the ridge to see Tornado Boy until near evening. And since it seemed the horses were safe enough there, Jim had, on one or two occasions, found himself so far away when evening fell that he missed seeing Tornado Boy for an entire day, riding to the ranch house for the night.

It was into this more distant valley that Old Coaly, Speck and the others, followed by Tornado Boy, now came. They fed until they were satisfied, then, as was their custom, gathered together and stood, some dozing, some alert and watchful. There was already a

TORNADO BOY

marked attachment between Tornado Boy and the big motherly gray mare, Speck. She liked him and made over him. Tornado Boy was responsive and came up to her almost as often as he did his mother. He now moved very close to Old Coaly, who stood just outside the group of other horses. She and Tornado Boy could be plainly seen by any one who might happen to look down one of the trails leading from Blazer's Creek.

At times, the horses pricked up their ears and looked westward toward the woods along the creek. Faint and far-away sounds reached them. They listened. The sounds were coming nearer, straight toward the woods along Blazer's. All the horses were uneasy.

This was in the days when Texas cowboys drove thousands of Longhorn cattle from Texas on the Chisholm Trail into the north and also to the far west.

On this night, Longhorn cattle to the number of two hundred thousand head, and score upon score of Texas cowboys, were on the plains and low bluffs for many miles around the frontier cow town well south of the river.

COMING OF THE HORSES

But in the valley of the Willow River, north of the stream, there were few cattle. For miles west and east, this valley lay still and hushed in the moonlit night. The wild grasses and the early summer flowers grew along valley and hillsides; and in the moonlight flowers and grasses and horses all stood with the hush and the dew upon them. Now and then the faintest of little breezes whispered along the grass and stirred ever so gently against the face of Tornado Boy, as he stood with his eyes wide and bright, looking with the other horses up the valley toward the mysterious sounds west of Blazer's Creek.

Old Coaly and Speck, unlike the other horses, knew the hardships in harness of pulling wagons over long distances across the plains, and even now as they stood in the night silence there were the hard marks and scars from the collars worn on their shoulders.

All of the older horses stood quite still, but Tornado Boy kept moving a little, then he would stop, head up, to look more closely out at the dim, shadowy woods. Old Coaly did not notice him, but turned her head to

TORNADO BOY

look with the others toward the timber.

The horses were standing well up the valley, near which was a well-beaten cattle and horse trail that led down from the northwest. For some minutes there were only vague sounds to break the night stillness, but now every horse started, head and ears up, looking and listening. They had heard the trampling of many horses coming down from the northwest; and all of a sudden, there came to them the sounds of the horses' hoofs thumping through the soft earth of the timber, then the splashing and churning of the water as they crossed the narrow creek, and other sounds that startled Tornado Boy and the waiting horses—sounds of men's voices. And at this Tornado Boy got in between Old Coaly and Speck and looked in a frightened manner at the on-coming trotting and galloping horses.

Chapter III

THE IRON SPIRIT

THE herd of horses that splashed across Blazer's Creek was followed closely and was being pushed rapidly by the horse rustlers who had stolen them farther north.

Tornado Boy, not having the slightest notion of what was going to happen to him or his companions, stood and looked at the dark forms of the one hundred approaching horses.

The herd came crashing through the timber of Blazer's and out on the valley with the silent men behind, driving them. All at once, the whole bunch took sudden fright at something and ran down the valley, sweeping Old Coaly, Speck, Tornado Boy and the others along with them. They swerved to the south and Tornado Boy was knocked and pushed so hard that at times only the actual crowding of horses on either side enabled him to keep his feet at all.

Suddenly, he tumbled down in a swale

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where the grass was above his head. He fell to his knees, was bowled over by a big horse, and each time he tried to get up, was knocked down by other horses rushing and jostling past him. By a lucky chance, he was not much hurt; but he was miserable enough, and so frightened that when he did get to his feet he plunged around and around in the tall grass and deep mud, uttering loud cries in the night. Then in his confusion of mind, he ran out of the slough and up on a knoll. Here he stood weak, frightened and trembling. Faintly he heard the sounds of the now distant running horses. Gathering strength, he uttered one wild, pleading cry for his mother and started south in the direction his senses told him she had gone.

Running with all his might, calling loudly for Old Coaly, he rushed down the valley. A long distance he ran and finally found himself at the river bridge where the horses had crossed. A new fear came to him. He was desperately afraid to cross this thing. But his mother was beyond. He must find *her*. He leaped out on the boards, fear torturing

THE IRON SPIRIT

his soul, and raced clattering across the long stretch of suspended boards that seemed never to end. When his small hoofs thumped once more on solid earth beyond, he ran on toward the southwest in the direction his instinct told him that Old Coaly had gone.

Tornado Boy raced on until he reached the frontier cow town, and still heading straight on, he ran down the dimly lit main street. A half dozen cowboys were lounging in front of a saloon when he appeared.

"Look at that little colt run!" yelled one of the men, and he fired his six-shooter in the air while the others uttered yells and fired like the first.

This only added to Tornado Boy's terror and he put on all the speed he could until he was beyond the town. Then, almost exhausted, he slowed down, still uttering anxious cries for his mother.

By the strangest of luck he was to find her.

The horse rustlers, cleverly avoiding the cow town, had driven the horses in a wide circle around it, and some three miles beyond again circled to reach the trail leading west-

TORNADO BOY

ward. In this way they had consumed some time, and the exhausted Tornado Boy, now only walking, was thrilled to hear out on the shadowy plain, a neigh that he knew. As he started in that direction, he saw a moving herd of horses and out of the herd one of them running and neighing to meet him.

As soon as he had rejoined his mother, she talked to him in her own way, and he at the same time tried to tell her by little, jerky cries, how terrible all this had been.

But the next moment two men came galloping up and Tornado Boy found himself driven with his mother into the midst of the herd. Crowding close to Old Coaly, he moved along with them, wholly unconscious of the complaints of one or two of the riders behind him who were saying that having a colt to bother with would not help the progress—that he would add just that much to the work, but others thought he might keep up.

The horses were hurried along until the gray light of dawn began breaking, then they were turned off the trail and driven into a deep

THE IRON SPIRIT

gorge where there was dense timber with a stream coursing along the bottom.

When the horses were allowed to halt under the tall trees, Old Coaly stopped, Tornado Boy with her, breathing hard and almost gasping for breath. It had been a great strain on him at his age. He stood for a time close beside his hard-breathing mother, his legs a little spread out to steady himself. He suffered with stinging pains in his chest and his heart pounded fearfully. Presently, he dropped down on the ground at full length and here he lay for more than an hour, not even taking notice of his big, black mother, who, time after time, put her weary head down to assure herself that all was well with him.

Twice Old Coaly and the other horses slaked their thirst while Tornado Boy lay resting. Now he arose and got milk from his mother. When he had finished she wanted to get away with him, and time after time she tried to slip out of the gorge with him, but it was no use. The sharp eyes of the men each time saw her and she was driven back to wait under the trees with the other horses.

TORNADO BOY

In places on the bottom of the gorge there were patches of rich, green grass and along these hidden levels the horses were watched and allowed to feed until darkness began creeping down the gorge, then they were again driven westward.

As the night fell, three days later, a rider who had been sent out some time before came galloping up to inform the boss that he had seen distant specks toward the eastern horizon that might be the enemy. At this, there was a sudden commotion among the men and the horses were driven out again to move rapidly forward.

"That colt will surely play out this time," said one of the riders.

"I thought so once," said the head rustler, "but he's got unusual mettle in him. See how far he ran to catch his mother."

Sometimes the horses were pushed to a trot, sometimes the men permitted them to move at a rapid walk, but hour after hour there was no rest, and as the time passed, it was supposed by many of the men that the blue colt would give up and drop aside, but nothing of the

THE IRON SPIRIT

kind happened. He would at times stop and spread out on his legs to rest, yet each time when they thought he had given out, he would come galloping up, neighing to his mother and telling her his trouble. But Old Coaly could only answer him from her place in the herd, for she was not allowed to stop. So, often lagging behind, but always running up again, Tornado Boy kept up with the others. Now and then he crowded in close to his mother when the pace was a little slower. He did not know what it all meant, he only knew that he was miserable and wanted so much to have his mother stop where he could be with her alone in the peace and quiet of some of the valleys. But it was no use; and again and again the hard breathing came, the feeling of utter exhaustion, and the stinging pains through his chest. But still he would not give up. Behind him always there followed the steady galloping of the horsemen, and always Tornado Boy could hear the squeaks of saddles and the snorts of the horses, while in front of him sounded the never-ceasing thumping made by the hoofs of the moving herd.

TORNADO BOY

As the time went by Old Coaly no longer tried to turn aside with Tornado Boy, for she had learned there was no hope of this. She could only move with the others, getting as near her colt as she might, when the pace slowed down, and calling to him when he whinnied to her from behind.

Then at last there seemed to be more than the usual necessity for speed. The horses had been at a walk for some time when there came the swirling of quirts and the whole herd was put to a gallop. A rider had come galloping in to say that many mounted men were surely following and that haste must be made to reach the foothills.

The truth was that, although Jim McDougal, Bill Cumberland, Bud Gorman and a dozen other riders were now pursuing, the rustlers had gained more than two days of time before it was actually discovered that they had driven the horses away. But once the discovery had been made the men rode west with a vengeance and every hour they gained rapidly. Now and then when they crossed a wide stretch of sand, Jim's eyes

THE IRON SPIRIT

lighted with fresh hope, for time after time, he saw the unmistakable form of a little hoof-print near many big ones. And Jim believed this was surely the track of Tornado Boy.

Chapter IV

THE TWO MOTHERS

TORNADO BOY, his mother, Speck and all the others were urged on rapidly and late one evening were driven into a small valley adjacent to the foothills of the Rockies.

It had been a hard day for all the horses. Tornado Boy was covered with sweat and foam. As soon as the horses were allowed to halt in the star-lit valley, he began to nurse his mother.

The horses were content enough here, for there were both grass and water; but as the hours of the night passed the men became more and more restless and at last, almost at dawn, two of their number came riding in hard, saying that the enemy were coming, and so close that it was going to be necessary to battle. Even while these men spoke, there came wild yells and the owners of the horses attacked, riding straight in and firing as they came.

THE TWO MOTHERS

Dawn was just breaking when the battle began. The firing was like the roll of a kettle-drum, and there was a wild rush of the frightened horses. Old Coaly was struck in the hip by a glancing bullet and, although not much hurt, she raced away in mortal terror, Tornado Boy running hard behind her. He did not know the meaning of this—but he did know that something bad was the matter and that both he and Old Coaly were in terror of all that was behind him. And still came the shots as Bill Cumberland and the men drove the rustlers far to the south.

Coaly ran on, with Tornado Boy extending himself to the utmost to keep up, until he could run no longer. In a little mountain valley which his mother had entered, he stopped, his eyes bulging, his strength utterly spent. Old Coaly ran on a short distance, then the absence of her colt brought her to her senses. She whirled about and came running back to him and stood trembling, her breath coming fast.

With the worst of it over, Old Coaly stood more quietly over Tornado Boy and encour-

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aged him to fill himself with milk. This he did as soon as he could get his breath. It put strength into him at once. Old Coaly stood for some minutes with her ears pricked forward, looking in the direction of the recent scene of the battle. She was still frightened and felt the smart of her wound and now longed to see some of the horses, for she had always been a social creature, wanting the companionship of her kind. But look and listen as she would, she saw no sign of them.

The grass was green in this little valley and a small, clear stream coursed through it. It seemed a place of peace and rest, all that Coaly's tired body might wish. After leading Tornado Boy to the small stream where he and she both drank of the cooling water, Coaly fell to cropping the tender grass. Tornado Boy, likewise, nibbled at the tender blades, but only mincingly. Although Coaly had near her all the grass and water she wanted, she was constantly nervous and anxious. Some vague instinct seemed to tell her there was danger in these strange surroundings. Every now and then she would

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throw up her head quickly and look toward the towering mountain peaks both west and north of her, especially toward the northwest, where there were vast granite ledges and jutting wild crags.

She passed the day alone here with Tornado Boy, and at last the night fell.

In the meantime in this hidden valley, they did not hear the faintest sound of many horses and men moving toward the east on the darkened plain. Most of the horses had been found, but others, wild with fear, had run into canyons and gorges to remain hopelessly hidden in the wild.

And Jim McDougal, now far out on the plain with the other men, had at last given up his search for Tornado Boy. And though he told nothing of the feeling in him, he was terribly disappointed.

The next day passed and it was about the hour of midnight when Coaly, standing in the center of the small valley with Tornado Boy close at her side, heard a sound that caused her to raise her head quickly, her every sense alive with eagerness. It was the wild, shrill

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neigh of another mare to the north of her, beyond the granite ledges. Coaly answered, loud and shrill, and waited, yet there was no responding call beyond the gloom of the mountain. Tornado Boy was made very restless and anxious by Old Coaly's nervous attitude. She trotted in a wide circle, neighing shrilly for an answer, and at last when none came, she stopped and, with head and tail raised, looked intently out into the night whence the first call of the other mare had come. But stillness reigned as she watched in the valley and she began to look with apprehension on every side of her. The same suspicious smell again came to her that she had scented just before she had heard the wild, shrill neigh of the other mare. It was not that she sensed any particular danger for, unfortunately for Old Coaly, she had lived her life on the vast plains far from the mountains. If she had had the experience that came to mountain mares, she would have taken instant warning when that faint, strange smell struck her nostrils. She would have known that not only her own life was in danger, but

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in particular, the life of Tornado Boy was being watched and sought by the scourge of horses, and particularly of colts.

That one wild neigh that Old Coaly had heard came from the other mother mare, Speck, who had run wildly from the battle as did Coaly, and escaped alone to come upon a yet wilder spot than that reached by Coaly and Tornado Boy. And that same night Speck had given birth to a colt. Then for a part of that night, all the next day and until the midnight hour, she had loved and caressed her little one, only to see, all of a sudden, leaping from a ledge above, a dark thing of doom that struck her colt with a snarl and finished him before she could move. Her wild scream had pierced the night as she struck at the mountain lion and then she had uttered only fearful, heaving grunts as she charged him, striking at him and so driving him slinking to cover.

Not until the next evening did she know she must go and leave the still form of her little one. Then she remembered the shrill mother neigh to the south of her. Her heart

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heavy with grief, Speck started in that direction. Almost at the same time, Old Coaly, still remembering the sounds of her kind, started up a trail leading past a line of granite ledges. Possibly in the brief time that the two mares uttered their neighs in the night, each recognized the voice of the other.

Fate played a singular thing here with the wind. It blew toward the ledge. Old Coaly, therefore, now got not the least hint of the long, lithe puma that lay at this moment up on the ledge overlooking the trail. The beast remained as still and as motionless as the rock beneath him. Only his deadly eyes moved with every step of Old Coaly and Tornado Boy. Disappointed in his hope of feasting on the other colt, the panther would try again. He could destroy the mare first if his leap were true.

It was not yet quite dark, but the shadows were deepening.

The same fate that took the warning scent away from Old Coaly carried it to the nostrils of the grief-stricken Speck, now approaching from the north. At the smell she

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came on apace, an overpowering rage driving her forward to meet this thing she hated with all her heart. Her grief was too recent to let fear and caution rule her. She wanted to be upon the enemy and be upon him quick.

In the meantime, Old Coaly, her eyes wide and curious, looking at every shadow and rock and pine before her, walked steadily up along the rocky trail, Tornado Boy following close by her side. And still she walked on, her hoofs sounding with a steady clatter on the rocky path, while Tornado Boy moved with more rapid steps, his baby hoofs making only soft sounds on the rock, and now and then he broke into a little trot. Sometimes his nose was a little ahead of Old Coaly's, at times he was a little behind, but generally he walked very close to her side.

The moon for some time had been shining brightly, but now its face was hidden by a floating cloud. Slowly across the moon the cloud moved and a deeper darkness was on the face of the cliff. At this instant a long, lithe thing of death shot from the ledge and launched itself straight for Coaly. In that

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flash of time, Old Coaly crowded closer to the wall of rock pushing Tornado Boy in with her. The panther struck, not the colt, but Old Coaly—struck her not fair on the neck, but on the withers, where he sank his fangs.

Like a flash Old Coaly, with a scream, lunged against the deadly beast as for the fleeting second it hung down from her withers, its hind claws tearing her flesh to get to her back. Had not Tornado Boy thrown up his head and sprung backward, the body of his mother might have crushed his head against the rocky wall. Old Coaly, with another wild scream, flung herself against the cliff, crushing the beast and for the moment rendering it helpless.

At the same time there came crashing sounds as Speck, the smell of the hated puma strong in her nostrils, came charging forward. Wild with wrath, she bore down on the scene at the instant the big cat, the breath knocked from him, fell from Old Coaly to the rocky ledge. Before the beast could regain his senses Speck, now insane with rage, was upon him. With a scream she struck him with a

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mighty front hoof and broke his ribs as if they had been sticks; the other hoof flashed down after the first to crash against the beast's head and the once dangerous thing grew limp on the rock. Then Speck, the grieved mother, trampled him, struck him and beat him into a pulp. Old Coaly stood quivering, and Tornado Boy, shaken with fright, crowded close against her. The wound in Old Coaly's withers stung sharply and there were stinging pains along her fore leg, where the claws of the panther had cut through.

Speck finally came up and the two mothers made mournful sounds, then both pricked up their ears and with a look of fear in their eyes they turned and moved back on the trail, Old Coaly leading, Tornado Boy trotting close behind her and Speck coming close behind him.

When they reached the center of the green mountain valley, both mothers stopped, and Tornado Boy, because Speck was nearest, began filling himself with milk from her aching udder.

The moon shone strangely silent on the

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small mountain valley where the two mothers stood with Tornado Boy. Now and then a little groan escaped old Speck, for there was an aching void in her heart. As the hours passed both mares stood close together looking intently about them in constant fear of wild enemies. Old Coaly kept quivering the flesh on her withers and legs where the wounds stung and smarted. When the cool of the early morning came, her pain was lessened, but an itching still remained.

By a common instinct, the mothers started out of the valley in the early dawn. They traveled steadily, Tornado Boy following closely, until they had passed out of the last fringes of pines of the foothills, and then they moved northeast on the wild, lonely plains; and now in the far, hazy distance of the morning, Tornado Boy kept looking, and he was troubled and always apprehensive. Speck and Old Coaly, leading him steadily forward, were also afraid. They, too, looked steadily into the distance ahead, not knowing what it held in store for them, yet sensing there was

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danger now both for themselves and the colt who followed so closely.

Tornado Boy's shoulder at times pained him sharply, for he had been caught glancingly in Old Coaly's surge against the rock when she crushed the panther. But he did not halt when a pain shot through him; instead he broke into a trot and that seemed to ease him.

As they went forward both mothers were equally concerned about Tornado Boy. Speck, having lost her own little one, had transferred all her affections to him and now she and Old Coaly instinctively wanted to find a place of safety for this little colt who warmed their hearts as he walked or pranced by their sides.

Chapter V

THE FALL IN STONY LONESOME

THE region where Old Coaly and Speck paused to graze was very rough, with sharp rises of ground and here and there low places filled with ponds and lakes.

For some time after the three stopped here Old Coaly could not feed on the grass as she liked, because her wounded shoulder troubled her. She stood still for a time shaking her head at the itching and smarting; then she walked about and after this her wounds did not seem to trouble her. She ate ravenously of the tall, green grass. Tornado Boy kept close to his mother for the time because the place was strange and he was instinctively afraid.

About midnight the air got very cool and Tornado Boy, now being somewhat accustomed to the place, became more and more curious. He started walking slowly out on a high ridge, wondering at the mystery in the

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moonlit night. Old Coaly was now filling herself with grass near Speck and she forgot Tornado Boy for the time. Once she raised her head and looked at him. Seeing him walking slowly away, she whinnied for him not to go. Tornado Boy stopped at the sound, but did not come back. He was vaguely interested in what was in front of him. When Old Coaly saw him stop, however, she seemed satisfied and again began feeding.

Tornado Boy had, a little before, satisfied his hunger completely. This and the cool, bright moonlit night put the spirit of deep curiosity in him. He walked on a little farther toward a rocky woodland and put his nose down to sniff timidly in a cluster of violet wood sorrel blooms among the scattering trees. Old Coaly looked up again and, chewing vigorously on a mouthful of grass, started walking rapidly toward him, calling as she came, and telling him that he should stay closer to her. And again she began feeding and moving slowly into the heavier grass. Tornado Boy stood looking beyond him for a time,

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then moved on a little nearer to a deep, narrow creek flowing through the woods.

This stream rushed and tumbled along over many rocky ledges, and at this point there was a falls where the water fell with a low, roaring sound, churning the pool below into a fine spray which spattered on the slimy, gray rocks along the margin.

To the left of the stream, where Old Coaly and Speck were feeding, was a short arm of quiet, deep backwater, which was surrounded on all sides by a precipitous bank, some five or six feet high. In places the water had eaten in under this circular bank and the green sod projected a little over the water. Instinct was only a partial guide to Tornado Boy. He walked close to the edge of the bank above the backwater and looked inquisitively down on the silent lake and then at the falls a little below. Still curious, he moved again, this time along the bank toward the creek.

In doing this, he stepped on what seemed to him a safe green plot of grass, but in an instant the whole treacherous mass caved down and he was thrown out into the deep

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current, the earth falling in and churning the water into a foam, while Tornado Boy went clear under. He came up strangling, water in his nose and mouth, but he was swimming. He uttered one wild neigh of terror, and then in desperate fear, kept up a most agonizing series of nickers and pleadings for help. He swam to the nearest point, but his feet only struck the steep, slick bank and slid off.

At the first cry from Tornado Boy, both the mothers came running up and instantly both were in an agony of suspense for him below. Both Old Coaly and Speck started around the treacherous place whinnying and calling, but all to no purpose. Speck was as much troubled as Old Coaly. Tornado Boy had nursed her as he had Old Coaly and she also claimed him as her own.

Dangerously close both mothers came,—time after time the earth caved off beneath their hoofs, yet they caught themselves somehow and still ran around the place uttering their cries of desperation.

But at last, blind love overcame both of them. There was a narrow point where the

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pool of quiet water flowed out over some tangled brush and driftwood, but of this neither mother could have had any thought or plan. It was the overwhelming mother instinct to get close to Tornado Boy. Old Coaly uttered a desperate cry; Speck did likewise and both plunged in, almost at the same time. They struck near together not far from Tornado Boy, and near the outlet of the lake. The weight of their big bodies as they struck made a tremendous splash and the waves from this impact drove against Tornado Boy, for the moment throwing water over his head, causing him to strangle and battle hard with his front feet to keep up. The waves rocked against him so violently he was thrown against the mass of brush at the outlet. He threw one quivering fore leg onto the débris and then the other.

The two mothers righted themselves, and seeing the back of his head above the water and hearing his pleading cries, they drove blindly toward him. That was all they were able to do—get near him. They could plan nothing more. But chance or some good angel

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of suffering horses was here on this night. When the two mothers came up, breasting the waters with their powerful chests, they sent another surge against Tornado Boy, and he threw both his long, front legs entirely up on the mass at the narrow outlet of the lake. The next instant there were splashing and swishing sounds, as both Old Coaly and Speck struck the drift and fought to get upon it. But the treacherous thing only sank slowly under their front feet and they could get no footing. The drift under Tornado Boy's forelegs began sinking. Down it went and only his head was out, but he fought with all his failing strength, and again as the drift came up he launched his fore legs up a little higher and across the mass. Twice Old Coaly and Speck turned from the drift and swam in terror around the merciless sheer walls of the lake. For the third time, they swam away, but again came back to the drift and Tornado Boy. Again he lost his support, and again went down. He was nearly done now, but still he fought—and still, when he seemed to have not an ounce of strength left, he edged a small

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front hoof up on the treacherous drift, where he got his breath for a little before the brush began sinking again.

With terror in their hearts, Coaly and Speck fought against the drift, now raising head and shoulders up as the main portion of it momentarily supported them, now sinking down again and all the while steadily pounding the thing to pieces. The next instant there were violent splashing and swishing sounds, as both Coaly and Speck fought through the frail dam, and before any of the three knew it, the mass gave way and they all fell down the steep declivity into the creek below. It was only chance that saved Tornado Boy, for both Coaly and Speck fell ahead of him. He rolled into the creek behind them and one hoof of Old Coaly's, in her blind struggle, grazed his head and sent dark spots dancing before his eyes; for the time, he could see nothing. But he was conscious and came up in the waters of the creek swimming. He got to the shelving bank, still blinded from the blow, but pushed through the bushes to the higher ground where he heard Coaly and

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Speck whinnying for him. Tornado Boy's vision had not cleared and he came up very weak. He put his nose once to his mother, then to Speck, and in sheer exhaustion sank down on the moist earth of the forest. Coaly and Speck stood close to him, making queer sounds. They did not quite know what was the matter, yet knew that all was not right with him.

Chapter VI

THE THREE TRAVELERS

FOR a long time Tornado Boy lay at full length on the soft earth of the forest. His strength returned very slowly, but at last his breath came easier. The fresh, cool air of the night revived him and he raised his head a little from the ground. This encouraged both the mothers who had stood close by, nosing him with deep anxiety. When Tornado Boy raised his head, both Coaly and Speck uttered motherly sounds over him to encourage him, and he got to his feet. He was very hungry and again he nursed from both mothers. Having finished his meal, he began to look with wonder at his surroundings, and in spite of the accident having so nearly finished him, he had now probably forgotten it wholly. The shadowy woods where he stood mystified and interested him, but also made him afraid.

After Tornado Boy had filled himself with milk, Old Coaly and Speck walked out of the

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woods along the stream to a narrow green valley on both sides of which was a rocky woodland. Tornado Boy stood not far from the two grazing horses looking out on one of the wooded hillsides. Along the lower reaches of the woodlands was a luxurious growth of red blooms of the wild columbine. Tornado Boy walked slowly up to these and thrust his dark, soft nose among the hanging red blossoms. He did not know why he did this. He was only vaguely curious.

The little valley lay very still under a silver moon, and the only sounds were those made by the two older horses feeding along the edge of the southern hillside. Sniffing at the wild flowers, Tornado Boy moved slowly along with Coaly and Speck. The valley was now wet with dew and his white hoofs were washed clean as they brushed against the very wet grass.

As Coaly and Speck grazed on they came down to a wide space of low, boggy ground and here they stopped to view the situation. After much turning and twisting they found a way around the dangerous bog. They

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passed down the valley to come to a place where there were no trees at all, not even along the small stream that flowed near the south hillside. The bluffs here were also bare of trees, and large gray rocks could be seen on both the steep slopes.

Old Coaly and Speck stood with their heads raised looking up the hill and listening. Tornado Boy also looked and he heard sounds that made him afraid. Close in between the two older horses he crowded. The sounds grew nearer and louder, and presently four yelping coyotes appeared on the hilltop. Coaly and Speck stood watching them, and now and then both snorted with anger. The coyotes moved about on the hilltop and one of their number, a large beast of his kind, slipped down among the gray bowlders until he was almost on the edge of the valley, and worked his way nearer still, but when he came out in the bright moonlight both mothers, with angry snorts, charged him and he disappeared like a floating shadow up the bluff side.

A little later a pack of gray wolves were

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heard howling in the north and Old Coaly and Speck spent the remainder of the night hours in miserable apprehension. Both strained their eyes constantly in the moonlight, watching for the grayish forms of the wolves and when daylight came, they at once started down the valley leading north and east. On and on they moved, and they walked at a rapid pace.

At last they stopped and grazed for a brief time, when Tornado Boy also got his meal, and he was greedy for a tremendous one. It took both mothers to supply him.

Both Old Coaly and Speck had by some mutual instinct arrived at a decision. It was to go far into the east where, it seemed to them, they might leave wild animals behind. All that day they traveled side by side, halting briefly to graze and to allow Tornado Boy to get his milk. As they moved on, the mothers walked so rapidly that Tornado Boy was often compelled to trot to keep up with them. Old Coaly still had trouble with her wounds at times, but they were healing.

One day when they arrived at some boggy

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ground where there were water holes, Old Coaly lay down with her wounded shoulder in the cool water. This relieved her very much and she did this twice again during that same afternoon.

For six days and six nights Coaly and Speck traveled east and north, leading Tornado Boy with them. And on the evening of the sixth night they arrived in a region of high, steep hills and rocky canyons. A heavy timber lay to the west, with a peaceful stream flowing through the depths of the woodland, and here some instinct that no man understands guided the two mothers.

Both Old Coaly and Speck seemed to be wholly satisfied with the place and it was a singular thing that both of them kept in this frame of mind during the days and weeks that now came and passed here. They had stopped where there was all the buffalo grass in the valley they needed to sustain them, a kind of grass that was still good when the frosts came, for it "cured" on the ground.

Then it may be that instinct took fear of wild animals away from them at this point,

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so far from the mountains where they had encountered the deadly puma. At any rate, both mares, although reared with men and having a fondness for those they had known, accepted nature as they found it and seemed to forget all now except that they desired to feed, guard their colt and be at peace. Whether they understood at this time that the forests and the rocky canyons would afford needed shelter in winter storms cannot be known, yet this may have been so. At any rate they did remain, feeding along the high bluffs day after day, sometimes ranging two or three miles to the east, at times moving directly into the deep woods on the west where they walked into the peaceful stream to drink.

As the weeks went by Tornado Boy grew very rapidly. When the frosts of September came, he was no longer nursing, but eating steadily of the buffalo grass with Old Coaly and Speck.

Although Tornado Boy had known Jim McDougal but a little more than two months, yet these were months of such fine companionship that the horse could not forget. He liked

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the other men, too, and there was something in him that made him feel lonely. He had a natural longing to be close to Jim and be friends with him and all the other men. And one day, when he and the two mothers were coming out of the woods towards the open, Tornado Boy saw, well down the valley, a white covered wagon drawn by two horses, a man driving from the front seat. Tornado Boy did rather an odd thing. He neighed shrilly, wildly, evidently glad for something, and while Old Coaly and Speck stood under the trees only mildly curious, Tornado Boy ran neighing and charging down the valley toward the wagon. Perhaps the thing that made him hurry so fast was the fact that one of the horses drawing the wagon neighed loudly and appealingly to him. About midway down the valley he reached the wagon and came running up, first near the horses, then closer to the man; and Tornado Boy looked at him and whinnied in a friendly manner.

This man was Bob Hansen, the freighter, on his way with supplies to a far distant ranch.

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Bob pulled up his tired horses, exclaiming, "Well! Well! Tornado Boy, as sure as I'm alive!" He got out with a rope, hoping to get the beautiful blue-colored colt, for Tornado Boy at this time truly was beautiful, tall and rangy, with grace in his every movement. He was scarcely a mouse color, for he was too blue for that. Already he had a pretty mane and tail which were both jet-black, and Bob looked with admiration at the four white legs, all of which added to the beauty of the young horse.

Tornado Boy leaped away when Bob tried to come near with the rope, but each time he would stop when out of reach.

Bob could not see Old Coaly and Speck standing in the cover of the distant timber. He wanted so much to get hold of Tornado Boy and bring him to Jim McDougal; Jim, the longing youth who still hunted for his blue colt and made inquiry every time he rode on a distant mission about cattle. But Tornado Boy was now too quick and swift to be caught here. Bob could only climb in his wagon and hope the blue colt would follow.

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Tornado Boy did follow for nearly a quarter of a mile, looking at the retreating wagon and neighing shrilly. Then looking back toward the place where he knew Old Coaly and Speck stood, he neighed again, trying with all his soul to say to them, "Oh, come! Oh! Do come and let's go with him! I want so much for all three of us to go away with him!"

But Coaly and Speck, comfortable and at ease, only stood looking mildly curious. Tornado Boy at last stood still, because he dared not go farther unless they came. He stood and looked at the fast, retreating wagon and then at Old Coaly and Speck as he still called pleadingly to them, telling them that there was yet time if they would only come quickly. And on and on the minutes sped while Tornado Boy cried out his heart to them. But they did not see the world as he did at his youthful age. They did not feel the storm of loneliness that was in his heart. At last Coaly sent forth a shrill neigh to him and so did Speck. But Tornado Boy did not come. He still stood out on the level, gazing along the

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wagon trail, when a sunset of gold sent its flash across the valley, splashing his beautiful blue coat with its dying amber.

And still he did not move, but stood alone on the wild plain looking toward the distance, and there was something pensive and longing in his eyes.

So Bob Hansen moved on toward his destination in the distant northeast, hoping to get the news to Jim McDougal, so that Jim might find Tornado Boy before he had again drifted away on the wild, lonely plains of the west.

Chapter VII

THE STRANGER

TORNADO BOY stood with his eyes turned longingly toward the white covered wagon until it passed from sight that evening, then with odd sounds that none but himself knew the meaning of, he galloped back toward Coaly and Speck.

Arrived there, he stood at the edge of the grassland and for a brief time looked at the distant turn of the hillside where the human traveler had passed from view. Old Coaly and Speck had seemed to forget and they stood resting, heads low, eyes closed in the peace of the quiet woods, but they both opened their eyes when Tornado Boy started walking away on his own accord.

Straight toward the hills he headed, seeming to have forgotten both Speck and Old Coaly. When he had advanced some fifty yards and still moved steadily on they both whinnied and called to him, but Tornado Boy

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paid no heed, only kept moving on steadily toward the hills on the northeast.

Both mothers started after him, at first making little sounds for him to stop, but as Tornado Boy moved on, and still on, they accepted his will and followed not far behind. Tornado Boy was growing older. The man in the covered wagon had awakened a longing in him, and in some vague way he felt and took to himself a new responsibility. His was a spirit different from Old Coaly's or Speck's. They might have lived out their days in the wilds, but something deep in Tornado Boy's heart was now calling, calling. He would have gone with Bob Hansen if only Coaly and Speck had gone with him. He could not leave them alone, yet he was now lonely.

There was a narrow deep cut in the hills where the ground was bare of stones and travel was easy. Tornado Boy arrived here and did not pause. He entered this defile and passed through the long cut for a quarter of a mile, when he came out on another valley, one even more beautiful than the one just left. A half dozen lakes of emerald green lay dotting the

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level as it nestled below high, pale green hills. Lovely thickets of willow and cottonwood grew around these lakes and a silvery stream wound its way through the length of the valley.

Tornado Boy stopped at one of the lakes, quenched his thirst and stood looking intently far down the plain that stretched away to the east. He seemed to be looking toward the distant horizon. Suddenly he uttered a shrill neigh and his eyes shone with eagerness. The human traveler in the covered wagon had circled the curve in the bluffs and was at this time driving along a high trail toward the east. But even while Tornado Boy looked, the wagon dropped from sight in a dip of the ground and he could see it no more.

Tornado Boy seemed now to desire to remain in this valley and Old Coaly and Speck were quite satisfied.

It was not many days here until the frost withered the buffalo grass and the nights were still and cold. Tornado Boy found the cured buffalo grass all sustaining and he accepted the way nature had placed him, feeding in the

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valley near the emerald lakes during the long daylight hours. Sometimes he would suddenly look up from his feeding and gaze with shining eyes far down the valley where he had seen the wagon disappear. And when he put his head down again to eat it was always with a little tremulous, sighing sound.

When the autumn deepened and nights fell more and more chill, Tornado Boy, Old Coaly and Speck would make their way into a dense thicket of cottonwoods where they all stood very close together during the hours of darkness. Then, day after day, the wind blew from the north; it stirred constantly through the woods, sending the last of the frost-blighted leaves swirling to the ground and moaning through the dark, naked trees. All through these nights Old Coaly and Speck slept, but Tornado Boy dozed only lightly, waking often to look out into the uncertainty of the night and the wild with its changing season. In him there was always the sense of danger here, and at times Coaly and Speck also awakened and looked out in the gloom with a sense of fear and trouble.

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As these nights passed and the days came, Tornado Boy was always hungry. And he was out long before the dawn, feeding rapidly on the buffalo grass, while Coaly and Speck still dozed under the willows and cottonwoods.

One day, about noon, Tornado Boy grew restless. He walked around the place where the two mothers fed, and often he raised his head to look down the valley. At last he started out and walked to the base of a near-by hill. On and up the steep slope he traveled until he stopped on a high rocky peak. Here he stood, his head high, looking into the north, his black mane and tail blown like silken banners in the wind. Tornado Boy looked steadily for some time toward the northern horizon. And still he looked, not moving in the least. At last he turned and made his way back down the steep slope and, becoming restless, started away toward the north.

Old Coaly and Speck followed him mile after mile, but when night came on under a brilliant moon they both moved in under the drooping branches of a giant willow tree and showed by their actions that they did not want

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to go farther. Tornado Boy remained with them under the willow tree until morning. Once more he fed with them until nearly noon, but all that morning he was very restless, feeding, and throwing up his head often to look first in one direction, then another and finally toward the east.

A week went by—and another. The nights now were sharp with the cold of mid-autumn and all three horses huddled close together in the hours of darkness under the giant willow tree.

One night when the pale moon shone dimly on the lonely valley, Tornado Boy pricked up his ears to listen. The faintest of sounds had reached his sharp ears, sounds that did not disturb the calm repose of either Coaly or Speck. They dozed peacefully on and Tornado Boy listened. The sounds did not last long. They were the distant hoof beats of a horse galloping across the plains toward the east.

It was Jim McDougal who had made a long search for Tornado Boy in the vicinity Bob Hansen had described to him, and now Jim was compelled to ride steadily and rapidly

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back on his trail, for he knew the danger of sudden storms at this time of the year. He had his coat collar turned up over his ears and he rode along with the unconscious, graceful swing of a youth born to the saddle—and Jim McDougal was terribly disappointed. Although Tornado Boy had been but a two-month-old colt when Jim had last seen him, he could not forget him; already he had spent days and even nights to get on the trail of Tornado Boy. And now with neither of them knowing, Jim was riding away—lonely and disappointed from Tornado Boy, and Tornado Boy, likewise lonely, was standing and listening to the faintest of sounds—sounds suggesting that a horse was passing in the shadowy distance.

The days went by. The buffalo grass was still all-sufficient for the needs of the three and all were still in good condition.

Late November came and one night a deep snow fell. Morning dawned, with a knifing north wind that sent shivers through Tornado Boy, Old Coaly and Speck. But the biting wind, while it threatened to end their exist-

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ence, saved them, for it blew the snow from great patches of the withered buffalo grass, and here the three of them fed day after day, while they shivered in the cold. The streams at last froze solidly, but fortunately there was one spring on a rocky hillside under an over-hanging cliff, where the water never froze, but flowed with a steady, gurgling sound from its deep protection. Here Tornado Boy and his companions came for water.

To the north, on the level valley not far from this spring, was a thick growth of elm trees, with much tall, dense underbrush and in the midst of these thickets was a vast overhanging tangle of vines. It was in this crude, wild shelter that Tornado Boy, Coaly and Speck crowded and spent the hours during the winter storms. Sometimes they were so cold they were compelled to shake their heads and move constantly in the woods while the wind and sleet and snow howled down from the north. But still the driving north wind swept patches of the buffalo grass free from snow and still they fed upon this and lived.

Spring came, and it found all three of them

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very thin and miserable. Tornado Boy was in the worst condition, for his skin was young and tender. His hair stood on end, and there was a hungry and sick look in his dark eyes. During March especially, all three of them had suffered because heavy snows had fallen that at times covered the buffalo grass completely, and only when a cold driving wind came was the white death driven from small patches of the life-giving feed.

At last the bitter days of cold and snow passed. When all the valleys were again greening and there was the drone and throb of life along woods and streams and far-reaching plains, Tornado Boy, thin and weak though he was, took the lead and started toward the east, traveling slowly to be sure, since they all three fed for hours at a time. But it was plain Tornado Boy was bent on traveling, and Coaly and Speck seemed more than willing to follow. As they moved toward the east the grass got steadily better, and, feeding as they did, their progress became slower still. Sometimes they did not travel three miles in a day.

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Then one evening, just after sunset, they rounded a low bluff-side to look down on a green valley. They suddenly stopped and all three of them gazed intently at a scene below them, but Tornado Boy seemed most interested of all. Old Coaly and Speck contented themselves by merely gazing, but after a little time Tornado Boy neighed shrilly. Two other horses were down in the valley near an old soiled-looking covered wagon—and a black man moved about the place cooking something over a small fire. When he heard the sound of Tornado Boy's neighing, the negro stopped suddenly and looked up toward the hillside. He stood gazing for a time with a dull stare, then a faint light came in his eyes; he chuckled foolishly and began talking to himself. A sudden enthusiasm was in him. He began to move rapidly and seemed to forget his supper on the fire. Hastily pulling a long lariat rope from the rear of the wagon, he started up the sloping green valley toward the hillside where Tornado Boy, Coaly and Speck stood watching his approach.

As the black man came nearer with his rope,

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Speck snorted a little and half turned as if to run away, but as both Old Coaly and Tornado Boy stood quietly watching the on-coming man, she also turned back and looked at him steadily as he slowly came nearer and nearer.

Chapter VIII

CRAZY BARNEY

ONE of the strange characters of the old West was the young negro half-wit, known as Crazy Barney. None knew where he came from, none ever knew whither he was going. A really skilled horseman in spite of his stupid neglect of them, Crazy Barney was always recognized from afar in his greasy-looking covered wagon, always drawn by a team of exceedingly poor horses. But his whole skill in horsemanship was in knowing how to bend the animals to his will. He traveled and traded in hides and other small things that suited his odd fancy. Hour after hour he would sit on the seat of his old wagon singing and laughing to himself, whacking his thin horses without enough sense to know what he was doing to them. And if by chance Barney got hold of whiskey he was worse than the merely foolish man he had been before.

When Crazy Barney first saw the two mares

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and Tornado Boy, his slow mind was about to turn from them when all at once it occurred to him that his own horses were getting slower and slower on the trail and that here was a chance to get better ones. Barney generally made such exchanges by some kind of trade, but there seemed to him now an opportunity to get a new team with no trouble at all.

Slowly he came on, and at last by a quick move he roped Old Coaly. As soon as she saw she was held the old mare made no resistance. The result was that the cunning Barney led Old Coaly away, knowing what would happen. Speck and Tornado Boy, lonely without her, followed on to the camp.

Not far from the old rattletrap of a wagon were two pitiful-looking horses grazing ravenously in the valley. They were old and both were thin and wasted from long, hard travel; their bones protruded and they were mere shadows of what had once been a beautiful team.

Coaly and Speck, who came up and stood beside her, were tied to the wagon and each received a small feed of grain. Tornado Boy,

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at this moment, came up close with a little friendly whinny, and before he knew what had happened a slip-noose was over his head. He had never before felt a rope or halter, and it frightened him. He struggled, and lunged back to free himself, but all at once he felt a choking sensation and with it a terrible pain where the rope bit his neck. Yet hurt and frightened though he was, he was no bronco. His intelligence told him to try to stand still. He did this while his every fiber shook within him. When he felt Crazy Barney's hands on him he had all he could do to keep from plunging again, but still that same thing in his brain kept cautioning him to be quiet and things would be better. Then, to his great relief, he felt the rope loosen and presently it was arranged on his neck so that it would hold, but would not slip and choke him. He felt dizzy and his legs were strangely weak. He stood batting his eyes for a time, not fully knowing what had happened. He found himself standing close to Old Coaly and Speck, who were now both lying on the grass almost under the wagon and dozing.

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Tornado Boy moved back a little and again felt the rope tighten on his neck. He knew what had happened to him before when he had pulled back; he was afraid to try it again and yet there was an awful fear at being thus tied. The rope that held his neck and frightened him was bad enough, but now he was still more frightened at the sight of the swarthy man lying quite still on the grass near the tongue of the wagon. Several times Tornado Boy moved back only a little, but always feeling the pull of the rope he held himself quiet and waited.

Old Coaly and Speck seemed to accept this, like everything else, as something that had to be. Neither of them raised their heads or even opened their eyes as they rested, tied to the wagon. The two other horses, old and worn, seemed to sense in some vague way that a change had come, for they did what they had not done before when turned loose for the night—they began to move slowly farther and farther away, now and then halting to graze a little, but again raising their heads and moving on, keeping close together, always to-

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gether, as when they had struggled together for so many months, pulling the old greasy wagon.

Night had fallen now and Tornado Boy looked intently at the two old horses as they walked farther and farther away on the shadowy, moonlit plain. Anxious sounds escaped him, but they were so low that even the dozing mothers scarcely heard him, much less the foolish black Barney who lay sleeping heavily.

When morning came Barney threw the harness on Old Coaly and Speck, put a stout halter on Tornado Boy, saw that he was well tied behind the wagon; then, mounting his seat and flicking the new team with the whip, he started them on. Tornado Boy had never been taught to lead and he did not understand. When the wagon lurched forward his head was jerked fearfully and the pain was excruciating, sending something like needles jabbing through his head. He lunged forward and stopped, and again he felt the cruel jerk, and still again it came before he knew what was wanted. Then he understood that he must walk close to the wagon, and he did

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this as nearly as he could, but time after time, as the wagon moved with a rush down a ditch or over a rocky trail, Tornado Boy's head was jerked painfully in spite of all he could do.

When noon came there was a very brief period of rest—just long enough for the foolish Barney to allow the three horses to drink from a pond, fix himself a hurried dinner while they ate nothing, and then he was on the road again.

Night came. Old Coaly and Speck, their muscles soft from long idleness, were sweating and quivering with exhaustion when Crazy Barney shouted at them to halt and climbed down from his rattling wagon. After leading the three horses to a hillside spring and allowing them to drink, he hobbled their front feet and let them loose to graze on the grass of the plain. Coaly and Speck had been hobbled before and knew how to manage. For Tornado Boy it was at first very hard, but he learned he must not fight the hobbles and that he must try to keep steadily feeding.

When morning came Crazy Barney made a radical change in his usual procedure with

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older horses. He studied Old Coaly and Speck that morning, and looked critically at Tornado Boy for a considerable time. Then he gave each of them a generous feed of oats from a supply he had in the wagon for trading purposes.

"If I don't feed these horses, and feed 'em good, I'll just about have to walk," he chuckled foolishly. Then he stood off looking with flashing eyes at Tornado Boy as he ate of the oats from a feed box on the rear end of the wagon.

"He'll make me an awful purty blue gelding, an awful purty one. I'll take care of him, and when fall comes I'll have him in harness and trade off the old black mare. I reckon she's his mammy the way he keeps close to her when he can, but she's getting old. I'll get rid of her before I get to the cow town. Guess I better hit for the southwest."

But it happened that Crazy Barney did not get rid of Old Coaly as he had planned, nor Speck nor Tornado Boy. A strange fate awaited them. Because of some whim, Crazy Barney traveled far into the southwest, into a

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land that held small hope for Tornado Boy. It was a region so distant that none of the men of the Cumberland ranch ever reached it. And while even now Jim McDougal was riding far and wide on many a false scent for his beloved colt, stupid Crazy Barney was unwittingly driving Tornado Boy steadily farther and farther away from Jim and the men of the Cumberland ranch. Old Bob Hansen, the freighter, hauled all of his supplies in a region much farther to the north and therefore he traveled far from the land where Tornado Boy now toiled behind the wagon of Crazy Barney. For, as yet, he had not been put in the harness. For more than two years, this odd character drove Coaly and Speck with Tornado Boy always behind the old wagon, and for more than two years Crazy Barney was either fearfully cruel to them or pampered them with the best of feed, according to whether the men with whom he traded skins and other things gave him whiskey in the trade or withheld it out of pity for Barney's horses.

And it was true that for the most part, when

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he was sober, the foolish young negro gave better treatment to Coaly, Speck and Tornado Boy than he had ever given to any of his other horses. But even though Barney remained sober for many days at a time, the three horses, always traveling, sometimes suffered for feed. And this often made them lose flesh rapidly, especially when the dull-minded Barney got it into his head that he must drive more rapidly.

One afternoon, with Old Coaly and Speck in a badly emaciated condition and Tornado Boy a thin and wasted blue gelding, Crazy Barney shouted for them to halt. Old Coaly and Speck did so instantly. A new thought had come into Barney's head. Old Coaly and Speck were very thin. So was Tornado Boy, but he must be used, in order to let the other horses by turns follow behind the wagon. It took only a few minutes for Barney to remove the harness from Old Coaly, put it on Tornado Boy and hitch him in her place, while she was tied behind the wagon.

Crazy Barney climbed up to his seat and gave the command to go. Speck started and

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Tornado Boy, frightened at all the pulling and jerking of straps and chains on him, pulled back, lunged first forward, then sidewise, reared high in the air and did all he could to get free. But Crazy Barney had had much experience in breaking young horses and in less than an hour Tornado Boy, covered with sweat and very much weakened, learned that if he pulled steadily beside Speck things would be better for him.

After this he gave no trouble. As they traveled further and further into the west, the three horses held steadily to the trail, obeying every whim of Crazy Barney. He gave up trying to trade his supply of oats, and each night Tornado Boy was fed first, then Coaly and Speck, and now and then each of them received a small feed before starting on the long day's toil.

One afternoon Barney met a freighting outfit consisting of a dozen wagons with four mule teams. The caravan had among other supplies a large quantity of oats. Barney had a small amount of money and a good saddle; he gave all of this for a large number of fat

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sacks of oats. The next morning he fed Tornado Boy twice as much as usual, and likewise the childish man gave Old Coaly and Speck a more generous feed.

In a few days the wasted horses began to gain a little in flesh and still Barney fed them more and more, and the farther he traveled the worse his head seemed to be. He talked to himself almost constantly, telling how he would go back to the cow town in the far southwest where he had once been a year before. He would be very good to his three horses and especially this young blue one that would bring a good price as soon as he was fat. And as Tornado Boy toiled along through the hours pulling his share of the wagon, Crazy Barney ceased even to flick him with the whip; and sometimes, following a childish impulse, he would stop, get down from the wagon and pat and rub Tornado Boy affectionately, and talk to him about the easy times to come, when once they reached the frontier town where horses had nothing to do all winter but feed and "be lazy," as Barney would say.

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Then, chuckling happily to himself, he would climb up to his seat again.

What the fate of Tornado Boy would have been if Barney could have proceeded on the trail alone can never be known, but destiny had ruled that this was not to be, for already two strangers were approaching in a wagon. On topping a high ridge, Barney saw them and his child-like wonder was aroused.

Tornado Boy's curiosity was aroused also, and pulling though he was, he cocked his ears forward and looked intently at the approaching wagon. Old Coaly, at the time toiling beside him, barely looked up once, then drooping her head, she pulled forward, paying no attention. But the nearer the wagon came, the more Tornado Boy looked and the more interested he became. He did not know why, but when he saw these new horses and men something like hope surged in him.

Chapter IX

DEATH VALLEY

THE strange wagon rattled up with the two men, one a large, heavy-set individual with dark, cold blue eyes, the other a slim man with an angular face and cruel, thin lips.

Old Coaly, Speck and Tornado Boy stopped on the instant the other wagon pulled up. The two men exchanged knowing looks. They recognized Crazy Barney and Barney recognized them and, as usual when he met men, he was completely credulous so that they could do what they would with him. When things went Barney's way he was happy, but when the reverse came he was cross and peevish, like a child. This was his disposition also when nature thwarted him.

"Say!" he shouted. "Me and my horses are about tuckered out and want to find water. Looks like I'm a leetle off my bearings. I want to git to the Chimney Butte country.

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Now tell me, am I headed right? And especially, where can I find water?"

The men whispered something low to each other while Barney was talking. They got down from their wagon, came over to him and one of them said, "Sure we'll tell you how to go and how to get to water too, but get down and rest awhile and eat a little snack with us. We got something you like!"

The tall, thin man pulled a bottle of whiskey from under the seat and handed it to Barney. This was Barney's weakness. He began then and there to drink, and drink heavily. The result was that in less than an hour he had traded all of his sacks of oats for a silver dollar and a small supply of liquor. The men now wanted to get rid of him quickly. The reason for this was that many of the old plainsmen held in contempt any one who would take advantage of the foolish young negro. And it had gone hard with one or two who had once gotten him crazed with liquor and taken all he owned.

The two strangers were clever. They wanted to take no chances of his turning about

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and following them. They told him the direction he must take to find water and that he "must not in any event turn from that course but keep right on, for it is a very long way."

Here an idea came into Barney's head. He had in his wagon a long doubletree suitable for drawing a wagon with three horses. All at once it was his whim to get out the evener, so that he could drive all his horses abreast. The two men humored him and helped him get his three horses hitched as he wanted. Then, shouting and laughing, Crazy Barney mounted his seat and started in the direction he was told. And with their ill-gotten cargo, the two men moved on and soon disappeared toward the east, while Crazy Barney urged his suffering horses on into an ever-darkening west. When an hour had passed, he was urging them straight into a region that, had he been sober, would have warned him of the danger, since he knew generally where water might or might not be found. But now his senses were dulled utterly and he plied his whip on all three horses, driving them over a region of ever-increasing sand and cacti and

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lonely dry gulches, with here and there some mesquite bushes and patches of barren ground strewn with small, flat stones that made the wagon jerk and lurch fearfully. This hurt Tornado Boy especially, and once when the wagon struck a large stone, the jerk on his collar was so violent it sent pains through his head and a weak feeling went all through him.

Old Coaly and Speck toiled on, heads down, miserable, hopeless; but Tornado Boy, in the same abject misery as they, had in his young heart an unutterable hope and he kept lifting his head and trying to look forward. Surely, it seemed to him, this unusual thing must soon cease. And soon, surely it must be soon, a friendly belt of timber would appear, and that would mean water and he could stop the burning in his throat.

But as the hours went by nothing appeared save the burning desert, and the horses felt the most terrible suffering that may come to all flesh when starving for water.

Night passed. Daylight came with the fiery heat burning into the now crazed Barney and the three horses. He shouted with a thick

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tongue and lashed Tornado Boy in particular. Crazy Barney was now suffering not only from the desert heat, but from the fire of the liquor in him, and he knew not what he did. Something like fire came in his throat and he shouted hoarsely while his lash descended. And by chance alone, it descended mainly on Tornado Boy and still on him again and again. But Tornado Boy no longer tried to surge forward when the whip fell. He could not, and the pain of the lash was not worse than the pain in his throat. Yet in all this he still weakly raised his head a little and still with the young heart in him looked and longed for the old sign of water—a line of trees.

Around in circles, stopping many times when the wagon wheels struck loose stones, surging against his collar again when he felt he must, Tornado Boy carried his part of the burden until the sun set and once more the burning, reddish-yellow sky of night loomed overhead; but the heat did not cease and the shadow of death moved nearer—silently—steadily—nearer.

All at once the horses stopped of their own

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accord. Crazy Barney lurched from the wagon and fell upon his hands and knees, but got up and staggered about his team. Mumbling, and at times half laughing, half crying in his delirium, he set about his old task of the evening—unhitching his horses. But now only instinct guided him. After much stumbling about, he got all three horses unhitched from the wagon, then still muttering and staggering, and now crying low, he somehow unbuckled the hame strap on Tornado Boy's collar and removed the harness from him. Likewise he pulled off Tornado Boy's bridle—and then the negro's brain ceased to function and he started away, stumbling and muttering; and mumbling still, he moved a few rods farther on, where, on reaching a little mound of sand, he pitched forward on his face. It was the last of Crazy Barney. If he had but known, he had traveled in a vast circle and the edge of the desert lay not far distant north and east.

Tornado Boy turned slowly and started off in this direction, for even in his suffering, his instinct told him the way out. Old Coaly and

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Speck, unhitched from the wagon but their harness still on them, tried to follow, but after a time, they began to stagger and stopped, looking in a dazed way at Tornado Boy, who still moved on.

Once he too stopped and with an effort half turned and looked back. He called to them, but they only stood with heads low. Tornado Boy turned and slowly went to them and by his presence, urged them to follow. Again, they came on a little distance, and again they halted.

As often as Old Coaly and Speck stopped, Tornado Boy would travel on a little, and finding the two mothers were not coming, he would faintly whinny through his swollen nostrils; and when they did not come he would turn and go back to them, put his nose to Old Coaly and then to Speck and make the only sounds he knew to try to encourage them to keep up and go on and on with him. As often as Tornado Boy did this, his two friends again made the effort, and again all three would move slowly on through the burning night, which took more and more of life out of

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them. Tornado Boy leading, all three passed into a low depression of reddish sand and scattering rocks. When halfway across the depression, Old Coaly stumbled and fell. A moment later Speck also went down and neither of them made any effort to get up. Tornado Boy stopped, turned and went back to Old Coaly. She lay very still and he could not rouse her.

He walked on to Speck. She raised her head with an effort and made barely audible sounds in greeting him. Tornado Boy put his nose down close to her and tried to encourage her to get up, but Speck's head sank to the ground as if she were very, very tired—and she lay still. After that Tornado Boy found that she was like Old Coaly. His companions were now both so silent and strange.

For a time he kept walking from one to the other, calling low, and pleading in his own way for them to come; and then, at last, he stood near Old Coaly, his head low, his eyes closed, and he seemed to forget the deadly scorching desert, the reddish, burning sky and

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the pangs of the awful thirst. Something made him know that his friends had gone out of his life, and he was utterly miserable and lonely. At last he opened his eyes, and without looking back started away.

As he moved on, he ran afoul of a mass of crucifixion thorns and they scratched and tore his skin until the blood trickled down in crimson splotches on his trembling legs. The heat struck his nostrils like the blasts from a furnace, and he coughed time after time as he plodded on. A rolling section of ground loomed before him on which stood many giant cacti. Tornado Boy weaved in and out around these and passed a number of them when, on coming through some mesquite bushes, he stumbled over a big cactus lying on the ground. He fell to his knees and the cactus pricked him painfully, but he got up and fought on, and, his instinct still leading him, he passed on to a different kind of ground with here and there a tree. At last he crossed the burning white sand, lunged on over a rolling hill and down toward a clump of straggling timber. At the end of a short incline he fell

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to his knees—and this was intentional, for he heard the trickle of water at the roots of a gnarled tree. He dropped to his knees below the tree, to reach his head up and drink from the precious, tiny spring.

Only a kind destiny saved the thirst-crazed Tornado Boy here, for the water trickled out so slowly that, fight as he would to drink faster, he could only take in the small portion that trickled down from the roots to a little rocky basin. At times when he had swiftly drawn up all there was in the saucer of rock, he eagerly licked the tree roots above and now and then even pushed his swollen tongue into the earth below the roots, trying to get water from the damp earth itself. Then again and again he swiftly drank up the water that trickled into the little basin. And here he remained, getting the water in amounts that gradually put more and more life into him.

When the dawn came, he started away, his instinct guiding him a little north, but chiefly east. He traveled until sunset, when he came upon some scattering tufts of bunch grass. He cropped the grass from this scanty feeding

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ground and moved eastward, halting here and there and feeding as he went. More and more he sensed that he was moving into a land of life. Twice he drank from mudholes; and still traveling eastward, he at last came to a low-lying green valley where there was much tender grass and a small stream coursing along in a sandy draw.

Alone as he was, he did not wish to remain here even through the night. He fed along the little stream and often raised his head to look, for he still wanted his companions and at times he uttered little troubled sounds. When morning came, he was undecided and apprehensive. He sensed that he was in the wild, where he must shift for himself, and the instinctive warning that told him of enemies in this region made him the more restless still. He seemed all through this day to be unable to decide what direction to take, and wandered in circles. He would feed nervously on the grass for a brief time, then stop, look up, startled at he knew not what, and in fear he would again look about on all sides of him.

The next night, under the pale starlight,

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with clouds half covering the sky, Tornado Boy started northeast. He traveled for several days, feeding leisurely as he moved on; and then, one night about an hour after darkness, he suddenly saw, in the distance beyond him, something that held his attention. It was a long cluster of darker shadows on a plain just below some long ridges. The night wind brought a peculiar scent to his nostrils; but Tornado Boy was not so much afraid here as he was deeply curious. He started forward toward the mysterious shadows, yet something in his brain warned him to act cautiously. He did not approach directly, but moved a little to the east, as though he were going to circle the dark objects. Once he halted and looked and listened. A dull, thumping sound came to his ears; but the noise ceased and he started forward again, still warily, and in a wide circle. Again he heard the thumping sounds and once more he stopped and listened; again the sounds ceased. Then he saw beyond the first long line of still shadows, a dark mass of something near one of the ridges, and it seemed that the thumping sounds he had heard came from

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this dark mass. And as he stood and looked, there seemed to be life in these shadows, for they moved a little nearer to the foot of the ridge. The light wind that moved steadily through the night again brought to his nostrils the peculiar scent from the distant, shadowy things. And he was very curious.

Chapter X

IN THE BRANDING PEN

TORNADO BOY stood for some time looking at the distant, dark, uncertain mass near the ridge, and all at once he felt an overwhelming urge to go nearer. As he walked rapidly up, there came to his ears almost constant thumping sounds from the shadowy moving things, and Tornado Boy got a strong scent that made him understand that the dark moving things were those of his own kind. He followed his natural desire to walk toward them, but he was watchful and cautious. Once he halted and was about to come a little nearer when he turned his head quickly toward the east and looked and listened. He heard the clatter of horses' hoofs in the rolling valley beyond, and presently two dim shapes loomed on the plain below and he heard the sounds of human voices—two riders who were driving a half dozen horses toward the main herd, which was being held here on the ranch of Giles Frazer.

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Tornado Boy stood looking, curious, wondering, as the small herd of mares with their colts drew nearer, and he was tremendously interested. Giles Frazer, himself, who was one of the night riders, saw Tornado Boy in the bright starlight. He called out to his ranch hand, "Look there, Jim! A stray horse and a beauty! Be careful now, easy! And we'll drive him right in with the mares."

Tornado Boy, as yet not afraid, did not move but rather looked with eagerness at the approach of the horses, for, as they came near, he sensed instinctively that they must be friendly. They seemed so much like Old Coaly and Speck that he wanted their companionship and gave evidence of this by lowering his head and whinnying as the first mare came up. Then he did the most natural thing for him to do, he turned and moved with the mothers and colts toward the mass of horses on the plain near the ridge.

Giles Frazer and the ranch foreman, Jim Bleger, had slowed down from the jog trot purposely to allow the mares to approach Tornado Boy slowly. The plan worked, and as

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Tornado Boy, with the mothers and their colts, was driven close to the ridge, Frazer said to his foreman, "That's one of the trimmest-looking horses I ever saw. Hope he has no brand on him. If he has none, we'll brand him in the morning with the colts and he'll belong to me."

Of this, however, Tornado Boy understood nothing, and without the least suspicion he walked forward, glad to have the mares for companions, and still, without hesitation, he followed them when they were all turned into a smaller corral leading off from a larger one, with only a fence of rails separating these two pens. Nor did the mares seem to mind the presence of Tornado Boy; and even when a small black colt came up to him and whinnied, and Tornado Boy solicitously nosed him, the big bay mother did not mind; she only looked at Tornado Boy with mild curiosity as he put his nose to her colt and talked to him in the horse language that both probably understood.

Tornado Boy walked about in the small corral, giving all his attention to the half

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dozen colts, because they were eager to come close to him, and the mothers, once in the corral, dropped their heads and rested and dozed, letting Tornado Boy alone. He moved about here and there, greeting each colt, answering each of their nickers with deeper ones of his own; and presently all six of the youngsters were around him, cautiously sniffing at him from his shoulders to his hips with that fascination peculiar to young things. In their brief lives they had had but little contact with other horses, with the exception of the small *remuda* now in the corral. All the other horses on the plains held themselves aloof, even angrily, and when the colts were about a week old, each of them had been bitten, once or twice severely, by the ranch horses they innocently approached. But it was not so with Tornado Boy. He was one of those species of horses which nature made quiet and kind, and the nature of Old Coaly was strong in him from the beginning.

The truth was that Tornado Boy now scarcely noticed the human voices at more distant points on the plain, nor did he observe

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that, as the hours passed, the vast herd of horses in the larger corral near by seemed to grow more restless, moving and crowding, and at times snorting as if they feared evil was coming, and in their dread were trying to find a way to escape. Some of the younger horses and all the colts had known nothing but freedom in the hills until now. None of the young mares now running, frightened, around in the larger corral had been branded, nor even felt the tightening of a rope upon their necks or legs. None of them knew what was in store for them here, yet some of the older horses knew and they communicated their fear to the others in both corrals. Both mothers and young horses were dreading something. But it was the few older horses in the lot who had a year before been branded, who were most alarmed and terrified, because they remembered. They had been in circumstances exactly like this when the trouble came. These horses it was who kept moving constantly, paying no attention to the others, but walking nervously around and around the corral with the evident fixed purpose of trying to get out.

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The younger horses milled around with them with no such fixed purposes, yet they would get free quickly if they could. The plan was that horses already branded would be separated and let loose when the work actually began at daylight, but nothing told the veterans of this and they kept the whole herd in a state of high nervous tension.

Tornado Boy at first was rather comfortable with the colts and their mothers; but as the night wore on the anxiety of the herd seemed to get into him and he began to be afraid. The colts, however, innocent of the coming events, were at ease, and when they saw how friendly Tornado Boy was, they kept coming up to him as often as he came near. Once, a little bay colt nipped him on the hip. Tornado Boy did not seem to mind this; he only switched his tail against the colt's head, and the colt looked curiously as if he himself wondered what he had done.

This had happened close beside the rails separating the large corral from the small one and as Tornado Boy turned his head to the little bay colt he was violently startled by a

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sudden tremendous thumping beside him. Then there came a surge upon him and a dozen horses, milling and surging against the other side, crashed through the fence between the two pens and plunged into the smaller corral. At the sounds of this violent commotion a number of the men came up quickly, but seeing it was only the fence between the two corrals that was down they paid no further attention. The horses were all now in one large corral, and all was confusion.

Tornado Boy, crowded back by the frightened horses, was soon moving around and milling with them in the big corral. None of the horses paid any attention to him and did not seem to know of his presence, since each was fearful for himself. The little colts, however, now jostled about by the main herd, came up to Tornado Boy as often as he and they were, for a moment, a little apart from the others. The mother mares were kept busy after the whole herd of horses crowded in upon them, and half the time they were lost from their colts. Almost constantly came the loud nickers of the colts, with the answering

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neighs from the mothers who could not get to them because they were in the jam of scores of milling, surging horses. Many times some of the colts, thrust from the mass, found themselves beside Tornado Boy, and he and they remained standing apart, very close together, until the mass of horses again pressed upon them and they were pushed on with violence.

Inside the corral, at one point, was a depression of solid rock. Once, when the herd became unusually frightened and rushed upon one another, a young horse was knocked to his knees on this rocky basin. He arose with difficulty, blood trickling from his wounded legs.

A number of men now rode near, but their presence only served to frighten the horses more. An unusually violent surge caught Tornado Boy in its midst. He was knocked from his feet and thrown sidewise on some uneven ground; and as he fell, a large sorrel horse was thrown against him. Tornado Boy struck the side of his head on the rocky basin and for a moment blinding flashes in his eyes made him helpless. He got to his feet again

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before he was trampled, and weak and dizzy, moved out in an opening near the extreme west end of the corral. Here he stood in a little angle made by the broken partition and slowly gathered his strength.

From now on an ever-increasing purpose grew in him. As often as he saw some of the riders moving in the night, he associated them with his hurts and trouble here. And the longer he stood in the angle and waited and listened to the surging horses, the more frightened he became. What had happened to him at the hands of Crazy Barney now came back to Tornado Boy. Not in definite thoughts, but definite enough; and this made him more and more afraid of these men who evidently held him and all the other horses in the corral to harm them. In desperate fear, Tornado Boy was suddenly possessed of an overwhelming determination to escape. And this fear in him was not blind. It stirred his brain to quick intelligence. He came out of the angle and started out in the corral, not aimlessly as he had done before, but with a purpose in his brain. He was not now as the other horses

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were. He was going to succeed in getting out. Their constant thumping of the ground and their violent outbursts only drove him to act more quickly. He started around the large corral, walking fast, very close to the rails composing it. Now and then a colt got in the clear and came galloping up to him, but Tornado Boy was too much concerned even to pay attention to them. They trotted after him and nickered, but he walked on with quick, nervous steps, his eyes, if they could have been seen, glowing with purpose. All at once a group of horses surged against him and as he was thrown against the fence he felt the top rail give and one end of it fell to the ground. When the mass eased off his body he stood up for a moment, his head outside the corral and above the fallen rail. He touched the rail, probably out of hope as much as purpose. The upper end fell also, hitting the ground with a soft thump which the men did not hear above the commotion of the surging horses. The corral was now more than a foot lower here, but in the darkness none of the men saw the accident.

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This seemed to give Tornado Boy his cue. He began walking back and forth here, and back and forth again. At last, nosing along the lower rail in the darkness, he started back frightened, when his nose struck the ragged point of a broken nail. He jerked up his head and breasted the place where the rail had fallen. It was still high, too high for any horse to clear perfectly, but Tornado Boy could endure this no longer. He backed away in a little clear space and was just on the point of rushing to leap the fence when the milling horses got in his way and prevented him. Then again, when the space cleared, he gathered his muscles and was on the point of starting for the leap, but once more a dozen or more horses ran between him and the fence.

The dawn was now coming. The foreman came in the corral and began swinging his rope to catch Tornado Boy and pull him forth to brand him. Tornado Boy saw many men approaching this side of the corral, some on horses, some standing on the ground. Near by was a small fire with a branding iron already heated red-hot. Tornado Boy did not know

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the exact meaning of the fire, nor the men, but the whole thing frightened him dreadfully and he believed that some hurt was coming to him.

The man in the corral, skillful with his rope, and doing only what he believed to be his duty, let the rope fly. It went hissing through the air and all but settled over Tornado Boy's head. As it was, it touched his ear, for he quickly ducked his head. It was very unusual for this cowboy to miss his throw, but the boss shouted, "Let him go, Jim, 'til later. We'll brand him after the colts. Get them first!"

At this Jim, the foreman, cast again. He caught a colt and pulled it forth. But at this moment a surprising thing happened. The colt, crying loudly as he was pulled out, struck terror into the heart of Tornado Boy. For the moment, the space at the fallen rail was clear, and as the man at the fire straightened up with the iron there came a flash of Tornado Boy as he leaped. So agile was he that he cleared the broken fence with his front feet, but his hind feet struck the topmost rail,

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and he fell. He was instantly up, and just in time, for the frenzied horses, seeing him leap out, followed, leaping and falling and crashing the corral asunder as, with a mighty rush, the whole herd surged into the gap.

At this moment a queer accident happened. The man whose place it was to brand the horses had his hand on the long iron rod and was moving the red-hot end in the fire when Tornado Boy leaped and fell through the fence. Highly excited, the man, who was very close, swung the red-hot branding-iron out of the fire to flourish it and drive the horses back, but just as he did so, Tornado Boy leaped up, and before either he or the man could prevent, he ran afoul of the fearful red-hot thing. It burned into his chest with no definite brand as his rush carried him past, knocking the iron from the man's hand. Tornado Boy screamed in pain as the hot iron struck him, and he shot away through the gray dawn straight toward the river a mile and a half away, the whole herd of three hundred horses running hard behind him. The colt that had been roped and pulled forth, now



*The horsemen rode hard to
head him off and turn the
herd back*

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left alone, leaped to his feet, cleverly threw his head down and freed himself from the noose, then raising his voice in piercing neighs to tell how miserable he was at being alone; ran like the wind toward the rushing blue horse leading the three hundred.

Whooping and yelling and bemoaning their luck because they had not caught Tornado Boy first, the horsemen rode hard to head him off and turn the herd back. And even though railing out against him as they were, every man of them, from the ranch owner down to the least of the riders, wanted him now with an overwhelming desire. And as Tornado Boy outran them, Giles Frazer, lashing his own fine mount to keep up, shouted to his foreman:

"He's making lots of trouble, Jim, but he'll be worth it all when we catch him!"

Unfortunately for themselves, the horses did not scatter as cattle would have done in similar circumstances, but ran in a compact mass, following Tornado Boy. The men spread out as they ran, congratulating themselves that within a mile they would surround

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the horses, since the river there flowed between high, precipitous rocky walls and the horses would check themselves and turn either to the right or to the left.

The foremost riders saw Tornado Boy swerve to the right, his white legs flashing, still leading the herd by a wide margin. This magnificent speed increased Frazer's desire to rope the blue horse, brand him and so possess him. But Giles Frazer knew neither the wild fear nor the spirit that was in Tornado Boy's heart, for to him these rushing, wild, yelling men were the most fearful of beings, to be escaped from at all hazards. The wound in his breast from the red-hot iron burned like fire.

He steadily outran the whole herd of horses. But now Jim Bleger, the foreman, on a horse of remarkable speed and endurance, kept well up, yet he could not gain on Tornado Boy a single foot. Both Jim and Frazer, however, supposed that when Tornado Boy came to the high banks of the river, he would be compelled to turn one way or the other, when some of them must certainly rope him. And

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as they neared the river, Frazer shouted for all the other riders to help capture the blue horse—they could round up the others later. At this moment a long line of scrub cedars and pines loomed ahead on the river bank; and Tornado Boy, still leading with amazing speed, thundered on toward the dangerous barrier.

Chapter XI

FLIGHT OF THE HORSES

THE horses rushed on in close formation, rapidly approaching the rocky cliffs of the river. Tornado Boy still held a lead of some twenty rods, but a half dozen riders on good horses were pushing him hard on both sides. And as they drew nearer the river, Jim Bleger, the foreman, who rode on the right, began uncoiling his lariat to rope Tornado Boy. Jim was afraid that the blue horse might break away from the herd and that none of the riders would be able to run him down.

A long, lean, sun-tanned rider on the left seemed to sense this also and, as they ran, he likewise lifted his rope from the saddle horn, making ready in case the flashing blue horse turned in this direction.

The thin line of gnarled cedars and pines loomed very near on the banks of the river. Tornado Boy saw that he must turn now if he turned at all. Checking himself in his

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headlong rush, he tried to whirl to the right, but at that instant a large, black horse ran alongside. Tornado Boy almost knocked this horse to the ground in his violent effort to turn. He stumbled slightly, saw men on both sides of him coming in, then, terror-stricken, he shot forward, and not in the least checking his rush, leaped far out from the rocky bank. One hind hoof slipped as he leaped and he struck the cold water half on his side. A large dun-colored horse was so close he all but went over, but more frightened at this than at the men, he threw himself back on his haunches and by a violent effort checked himself. Another horse crashed into him and was stopped also. The next horse, a sleek pinto with blue eyes, swerved sharply to the left and the whole herd followed him, moving away from the river toward the open ground.

Jim, the foreman, spurred alongside the herd until he saw they were well bunched and running toward the ranch in the distance, then checking his horse violently, he turned and galloped back to the river. Miguel, a Mexican cowboy, galloped back with him. Both

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knew of the dangerous falls not far below, where the water shot down forty feet to drop in a churning rapids on the rocks below. And the foreman, in particular, felt pity for Tornado Boy, for it seemed that now he must surely perish.

At a rapid gallop Jim led the way down the stream, and riding through some scrub pines pulled up his horse at a point overlooking both the falls and the stream above. Miguel was beside him. Both men looked quickly down on the churning rapids below the falls and up the river at the swiftly rushing water coming down.

No sign of the beautiful blue horse was to be seen on the face of the water. The men looked sharply a little longer, first above and then again below the falls, to see if in this latter place they might discover his lifeless form whipped around by the waters, as they had seen two horses once before—two horses and also a dog who had swum down too far and been caught in the treacherous current that carried them over.

While Jim and Miguel had been running

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their mounts to gain a vantage point near the falls, Tornado Boy was swimming the deep, narrow stream. He reached the other side quickly, but the banks were at that point too steep for him to land. Down the stream he swam, his large, dark eyes shining with anxiety as he looked for a slope where he might escape. Suddenly a long, deep cut appeared before him and the next instant he was out of the water and lunging up into this very narrow defile. Here he had to battle for his passage out and to the land above. He tried once and failed, then again and again.

It was impossible for the two men to see him in his desperate situation, and Jim was puzzled at his complete disappearance.

"Seems strange, Miguel," he said. "Looks as if he had not come down to the falls yet. I don't see where he could find a footing to hold himself back. There's the deep cut a little upstream, but he never could think fast enough to catch that as he went by, and once past it he never could swim against the current back to it. But he must be up there some-

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where, unless he was carried down quicker than we think."

A frown of deep disappointment came over Jim's face. "Thunder!" he exclaimed. "That was an awful pretty horse and he would have made a mighty good one. Who would have thought he'd be so plumb scared that he would jump off there! But his eyes were blazing something terrible and I could see that he was wild with fear. Maybe it was the squealing of the horses and maybe some one's had him that has been rough on him. Seems queer, the marks on his neck. Looked like some one had had him in harness making him pull a heavy load. What do you think, Miguel?"

"So to me," said Miguel. "Funny though that anybody'd want to work him and not ride him."

"He's gone now for good, I reckon," said Jim. "Was carried over the falls quicker than we expected."

Jim, followed by Miguel, rode out of the straggly cedars and onto the open plain looking toward the distant ranch house. They

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saw a cloud of dust there and noted that the horses were again being gotten in hand.

"You better go on and help the boys, Miguel," said Jim. "I'll be coming along pretty soon."

At this Miguel galloped rapidly away and Jim turned his horse in among the scrub cedars and pines. Then, when the horse stopped suddenly and snorted in fear of the high bank, Jim dismounted, and letting his mount stand, walked close to the edge of the frowning, rocky wall and looked searchingly down along the bank of the tumbling stream on the near side. There were places here and there where low bushes and trailing vines grew from the scanty soil in crevices of rock, and at one point a little down, a young cedar stood in the midst of a small thicket. There was no sign of life there, but Jim walked down until he stood directly over the place. There was a sharp bend here and he had said to himself that it was just possible that he might see on the other side the blue horse, clinging with his forefeet to the edge of the steep bank, not able to get up. Yet on looking down, Jim saw nothing

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but the high steep banks and heard only the ceaseless swirling of the waters beneath him, with now and then a faint movement of a branch of the small cedar below when a violent surge of the water threw a fine spray on its branches.

Jim raised himself up from his stooping position and looked across the stream. He could see plainly along the foot of the rocky banks. Little crevices here and there, with now and then an overhanging ledge; and the rocks for two or more feet up were drenched with a spray from the tumbling waters.

Jim turned toward his horse and as he did so, looked casually up the stream toward the other side. He started in astonishment. He saw, for an instant only, the flash of a black tail, then it disappeared in the defile. Jim instantly understood all. He got quickly to his horse and galloped up to a point opposite the cut on the other side. He had not looked here, because he thought it was such a short way down from the point where the frightened horse had leaped into the river that he would have been swept quickly past, even

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though he had tried to land. Yet Tornado Boy had landed there, for there he was now—fighting to get through the narrow defile.

As Jim watched the horse lunge into the gap time after time, he believed he would never make it. By making a ride of hours one could cross the river at a point far above, then come up on the other side and so down to this cut with a rope. But Tornado Boy would then be likely to plunge back into the river, he believed, and so go out and over the falls. Even with a rope on him, it might be impossible to drag him through the pass.

Then Tornado Boy surged back free and stood for a time facing the cut, his head down, getting his breath. As yet, he did not know of the man's presence on the other side; but now Jim's horse blew loudly through his nostrils and the sound seemed like an electric shock to Tornado Boy. He jerked his head up and looked around, his eyes bulging. When he saw the man he was again terror-stricken. He plunged into the cut with all his might—jammed, fought with his front feet, reared a little, fought and wriggled and did not stop

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until he was through! Then plunging up, his sides brushing against the wider defile, he lunged on and up to the high ground at the top, trotted off a distance on a grassy plain and stopped. He saw the man on horseback on the other side looking at him. Yet he seemed to know that this man could not come to him, at least not for the time, and after a few minutes of hard breathing, he started off, walking rapidly toward the northeast. He was afraid the man would somehow get near him again. Tornado Boy did not know where he should go. All he could think of was to get as far away as possible. He could see, in the distance on the other side of the river, the horses still running with the riders after them, and he could hear the wild shouts of the men. Time after time he stopped and shook his head because of the pain in his breast where the hot iron had burned him.

The man on the other side was still looking at him, and the more Tornado Boy looked and saw him silently watching, the more he was afraid; and in order to get out of sight quickly, he turned and broke into a trot. More

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and more rapidly he moved and finally galloped away toward the hills to the east. He wanted to halt and breathe again, but all that shouting of men and running of horses beyond the river told him he must keep going.

In the meantime, Jim, the foreman, still watched him, watched him and calculated where he might halt so that he might be found, brought in and branded with the others. But Tornado Boy did not halt when the hills once hid him. Hunger had left him and when night fell on the wild plains, he was far to the north, only walking, walking slowly, and now and then shaking his head at the burn in his chest. The day had been so full of fright since the dawn; so long and so miserable; and a vague remembrance of his days with Crazy Barney also came like a hideous dream.

Fear of men drove him on and on. Yet he was desperately tired; and at last, although still looking back and fearing constantly, he walked more and more slowly and more slowly still, then stopped, and standing where he was on the sod, closed his eyes and tried to shut out the world of trouble from his brain.

Chapter XII

THE BATTLE WITH THE WILD STALLION

THE autumn woodlands stood pensive and silent along the stream and valley of the Wild Horse. Blooms of the aster stood hushed in the dying grasses, and from the willows along the river the leaves of another summer fell, faded and dying, to the waiting earth.

A strange hush lay over valley and hills. Each morning the sun arose from the haze in the east, and, passing swiftly through the silent hours, hung poised for a moment in the distant west for a last look upon a dying world.

On this day the sun had set and darkness had come. In the quiet woods along Wild Horse Creek, there came a movement in the branches of a low-hanging willow near the water, and Tornado Boy came down to drink.

Day after day he had roamed about in this quiet place, for he found all he needed in water and feed and was now getting in good condition. His trouble was that day and night

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he was always lonely, always so lonely. And all through the hours of the day and many times in the night he would stop feeding and go to some high hilltop where he would stand and look and listen for a long time, hoping he might see some of his own kind. But no matter whether he looked by day or by night, it was always the same—no sign of companions, nothing but the melancholy valley and hills around him.

The days passed, and when late autumn came Tornado Boy was still feeding along the valley of the Wild Horse. One morning he wandered toward the west for several miles, coming at last into a broken country of high hills and narrow valleys. He was just emerging from a defile in a hill range opening on a level valley when he stopped quickly. He was entirely hidden here, except his head and neck, which could be seen from the valley.

Tornado Boy had stopped because he saw on the level, a little to the left of him, a herd of twenty or more wild horses. This herd, as it happened, was led by one of the most widely known and dangerous wild stallions

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that ever roamed the old West. It was a matter of record that he had fought and killed three horses. And late one evening less than a year before, while old Ben Hadley was making a twenty-mile walk toward a ranch because his horse had broken its leg, this same wild stallion, known as the Roan Terror, had come charging out of a canyon and attacked him. Hadley was struck down before he could draw his six-shooter. The savage stallion whirled and leaped for the prostrate Ben, when the old man got out his revolver and fired. The bullet cut a flesh wound in the shoulder and the roan was gone like a shot.

After this he had been hunted for weeks, but he evaded his hunters and moved farther west. Then one night a man, unarmed and on foot, having got lost from a covered wagon, was attacked by this same stallion. It happened that some horsemen chanced to ride up and saw the stallion run away, but they were too late to save the life of the man. Still again, the roan left the region and moved farther west. Rumors had come in this same fall that he had all but killed another man who

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had escaped by hiding in some thickets along a river. And it was known that another gelding had been killed by this scourge of the plains.

Tornado Boy, of course, knew nothing of the Terror. He did know, however, that the fat, sleek, roan horse that now kept moving almost constantly around the small herd of mares did not look friendly. And then the roan suddenly stopped, jerked up his head as quickly as a snake, and looked with blazing eyes at a man moving all unaware up a bluff-side that at this point fell away to the valley. It was old Bob Hansen, who had traveled all day, sick with a fever, in his covered wagon. Now he had stopped his weary horses, which remained hidden behind a clump of trees below him.

Old Bob was toiling up to a higher point, hoping to see some friendly traveler in the distance whom he might hail for help, for, during the last few hours, Old Bob hardly knew the directions. Weak and sick, he yet fought on with the spirit of the Old West in him. He was still conscious enough to know

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that it was many, many miles to the Bill Cumberland ranch, the nearest habitation. And he had only a faint hope that he might see some friendly rider on the lower land.

Bob took one look in the direction of the Cumberland ranch, but saw nothing. If he had not been so sick, he would have seen everything, but as it was, he did not go quite far enough along the summit, where he could have looked directly down. His own head however was seen by two glaring eyes, and Bob, unknowing, turned and moved down the slope. He was just at the foot of the bluff, when, to his consternation, he saw the roan stallion charging upon him. Bob, like other plainsmen, knew the history of this horse, and, having no weapon with him, he believed he must surely be done to death.

He turned to pick up a stone, when he saw running out of a defile in the hill beyond, a blue horse with flashing white stocking legs, the right front leg all white. And even though Bob Hansen believed death was upon him, he was positive this was Tornado Boy, the little colt now a grown horse. And Tor-

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nado Boy was coming toward Bob Hansen, nickering loudly as he came—coming probably because he had all at once decided that he wanted companions. Perhaps he thought he would find them in both Bob Hansen and the roan stallion.

Bob Hansen had no time to do anything. The stallion was upon him, rearing and striking, and Bob went down with crushing force, three of his ribs being broken. The strength was knocked out of him, yet he was perfectly conscious, and supposed the stallion would trample him. But at this instant the stallion whirled, surprised and maddened to see the blue horse rushing up, nickering in a friendly appeal. He turned from the prostrate man and halted with blazing eyes to take one swift look at Tornado Boy. He looked only long enough to satisfy himself that Tornado Boy was alone, then with a squeal telling of his deadly intent the savage came rushing toward the surprised Tornado Boy.

The mares, at the squeal of the stallion, suddenly stopped feeding and stood very still, watching. The rush of the roan beast, the

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deadly squeal, a lone horse standing a little away—this they had seen before, and always after the squeal and the rushes, the lone horse lay still and mangled on the plain. It seemed it would be so again. The mares stood hushed, dumb, wondering, their ears now stiffly forward and now twitching alternately, but no other part of them moving.

Tornado Boy, now sensing that this creature was an enemy, savage, deadly, did not try to run away but stood facing the charging stallion.

As the roan drew very near, his long neck shot out straight, his ears went flat to his head, his savage eyes burned with destruction. He slashed at Tornado Boy as the latter whirled to evade the rush. Tornado Boy was not quite quick enough; the stallion caught him fairly on the withers and held. The pain was excruciating. Tornado Boy reared high, tore the stallion loose and, as he did so, felt a wild, overwhelming rage. He whirled, reared on his hind legs and standing high in the air, struck savagely at the enemy with both sharp hoofs, but missed.

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In weight the stallion was slightly heavier, but Tornado Boy had the advantage in quickness; and while the killer-horse was more compactly and heavily built, Tornado Boy was more rangy and agile.

Tornado Boy had scarcely touched the ground with all four feet when the Roan Terror again shot out his neck like a snake and struck for the other's shoulder muscles. This wild savage of the plains had a way of cutting the shoulder of a gelding to shreds, as was proven by his work of other days. He now caught Tornado Boy only by a vestige of the skin; his cutting teeth ripped clean and no great damage was done; but Tornado Boy, now stinging with pain, drove in upon his enemy with teeth and striking hoofs. So swiftly did Tornado Boy strike with his hoofs, that the stallion, with fearful squeals, reared to defend himself. At this moment Tornado Boy reared also, lost his balance and lunged forward to catch himself. As he did so, one foreleg by chance swung around the stallion's neck. The Terror, squealing constantly, seized Tornado Boy by the skin on one side

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of the neck, but the roan's hold was broken as Tornado Boy's weight, falling against the stallion from the higher ground, knocked him over backward. The roan went down with a terrific thud to the sod; Tornado Boy went down also, but only to his knees. He was up like a cat, and, before the other could recover himself, he whirled and launched out with both powerful hind legs. He struck twice, two mighty pile-driving blows that brought grunts from the roan; but the latter leaped to his feet, his weasel-like spirit driving him in. When the stallion again, with ears laid flat to his head, drove forward with his murderous teeth, Tornado Boy, with amazing quickness, reared slightly and struck hard with a right front hoof. He caught the Terror a stunning blow just above the ear and sent him back. But the killer squealed, rushed in, reared and struck with his front hoofs like two flails.

So quick was this rush that Tornado Boy, as he dropped to his forefeet, was not prepared, and one of the cutting hoofs struck him on the withers, cutting to the bone and sending lancinating pains through the wound. Tor-

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nado Boy, on lower ground and below the stallion for the moment, was in desperate fear of the deadly, flashing teeth. He leaped aside, bit once savagely at the stallion's flank, ripped it and leaped in the clear again. The dangerous enemy dropped to all fours and charged again with his teeth. This time, as Tornado Boy whirled to meet the attack, one hind hoof slipped on a round stone, checking him, and the steel-like teeth of the stallion sunk in his opponent's hip. Instantly, Tornado Boy let drive both heels with all his might. One hoof struck the stallion on the right leg below the knee and all but broke it. As it was, the infuriated beast was knocked loose from his hold on the hip, but this checked him only temporarily and he rushed in again. Tornado Boy was turning at the moment and before he could get in action, the stallion, with his teeth, caught him in the shoulder and tore a slash that sent the blood streaming, and then using all the cunning of his many battles, when he had destroyed other horses, he dodged, reared and struck with his front feet, always with his murderous mind

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bent on getting his teeth in Tornado Boy. In spite of Tornado Boy's striking front hoofs, and now and then his savage kicking with both hind feet, the roan beast kept rushing in with what seemed to be increasing savagery and he cut Tornado Boy and slashed him in a score of places. But the gelding kept him moving and turning, and he also slashed his enemy time after time. Nevertheless Tornado Boy was growing weaker for now both his shoulders were streaming blood.

In this deadly struggle, the two had moved toward the steep, rocky wall of a hill, rising up from the west end of the valley. Here the stallion drove in, Tornado Boy whirled to avoid the rush, and the stallion, missing him, brought up with a jar and a grunt against the rocky wall of the hill. At the same instant Tornado Boy, at the moment on all four feet, let fly with both hind hoofs. For the first time the distance was such that the full force of his mighty pile-driving blows reached their mark. One hoof struck the roan's knee and in the next flash the other hoof crashed against it also. The stallion lurched sidewise and in

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doing so plowed into a mass of stones, where he stumbled and fell. The outraged Tornado Boy let loose again, striking the Terror on the head as he pitched prone to the ground. Still kicking with all his power, Tornado Boy drove in again and again three times, striking the savage fair on the head, crushing his skull and leaving him lifeless on the rocks. And at last, quivering and with blood streaming from slashes and rips on his shoulders, his hips, his sides, his withers, breathing hard and groaning and uttering little sounds that seemed like crying, Tornado Boy walked slowly away from the Terror of the plains. He would torture and kill no more horses, and men were now safe from this dangerous beast of the west.

Time after time Bob Hansen had tried to get away. Once he struggled to his hands and knees, then fell. His sickness and the injury were too much for him; after each struggle to arise, he would fall to the ground, and although groaning with pain, he set his eyes on that amazing battle.

When it was over, Old Bob tried to call to

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Tornado Boy but his words were weak and low, and the horse had perhaps by now forgotten the man.

All that Tornado Boy knew now was that he was so weak, so stiff; darkness had suddenly begun to come before his eyes, but he staggered on to get away from this fearful place. Once, in his half blindness, he saw the forms of the wild mares still standing silent, looking. But he feared even them and wanted to get away from all this hate and battle and suffering. No matter where, just so he might get far away from it all.

At last, the strange half-blindness that had come over him seemed to grow worse. Then things changed from dim shadows to complete darkness, and although the night had fallen, Tornado Boy was only dimly aware of it. As he moved along, his nose struck a tree so hard that pains shot through his head and he could go no farther. He sank down on a little bed of leaves in a small wood. The blood was still trickling from his many wounds.

It was a week later that Hansen, with the indomitable fighting spirit in him, drove up

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to the Bill Cumberland ranch house. It was late in the evening and all hands were at home. Jim McDougal was the first to reach Bob, but Cumberland and Bud Gorman came up quickly. Holding his lines while lying on a crude bed of blankets in the wagon, Bob told them what had happened to himself and Tornado Boy.

A flash of concern and purpose shot across Jim McDougal's face, but he spoke no word until he had helped get Old Bob in a comfortable bed where he might recover. Then young Jim straightened up and said, "Bob, tell me in what direction Tornado Boy was going when you last saw him."

"He was going northeast, Jim, as near as I can recollect—yes, it was northeast; I remember how he passed out of sight toward a belt of woods in that direction. But no telling where he is now. I hope you find him, Jim. I know he was hurt."

All the next day, and the next, and the next, Jim McDougal rode on to the distant valley and searched. He found the carcass of the Roan Terror, then set out from there to hunt

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for his beloved horse. Jim's supplies lasted four days, when he was compelled to begin traveling toward the far distant ranch. His eyes scanned every hill and valley, every ravine and rolling plain, then every distant horizon over a wide expanse in every direction. But Jim McDougal found no trace of Tornado Boy; and at last there came a fearful night when all hunting ceased.

Chapter XIII

THE DEMON OF THE NORTH

THE November moon hung pale and lonely over a land far north of the Wild Horse, and the night was damp and chill. About midnight dark storm clouds rolled across the sky and a cold rain began falling.

Tornado Boy had wandered north and northeast after the battle with the stallion, and search as he would, he had for days found only poor feeding grounds. The result was that with the damp, chill winds and scanty feed, he was becoming thin.

When the rain began falling on this night, he hurried into the densest bushes he could find. The cold rain did not cease until morning, and while it was still drizzling in the dawn, Tornado Boy was out shivering and cropping off the twigs about him. When noon came, he started out for a new feeding ground, and by halting and eating only when he must, he came, on the third day, into the little val-

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ley of the Cedar River. Here was good feed and he ate ravenously of the buffalo grass for hours at a time, seeming never to get enough of it.

After a week of this rest and almost constant feeding, he began to take on flesh. For the time this quiet valley seemed to give him all he desired; and he remained, eating through the hours of the day and at night resting and dozing in a pocket of a near-by perpendicular hill on the north side of the river.

Late one evening, in early December, the sun sank behind a dark and threatening cloud. There came the distant rumble of thunder; and looking up from his feeding, Tornado Boy saw streaks of fire shooting through the cloud. A sharp, chill wind struck so hard that he had to brace himself to stand against it. The darkness of night was coming, and it was coming fast. Tornado Boy sensed the approach of a storm and it frightened him. He trotted across the valley, crowded up through the brush and got in the spacious pocket in the high perpendicular bank. Here he stood with

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his head up, his ears moving nervously back and forth as he looked into the rapidly deepening darkness. Darker and darker the night fell. For a time there was absolute stillness over the earth except the muttering of the thunder. Then the rain began pelting down. Tornado Boy backed into the pocket as far as possible and here he stood waiting. The cold wind whipped down incessantly and hour after hour the rain fell. At last it ceased and the night grew steadily colder.

When morning came, Tornado Boy looked out on the plains, to find nothing but a sea of ice, and it happened here that one of the strangest and most fatal storms in the history of the Old West had come. At first Tornado Boy did not know the meaning of it, and it was only when the broad daylight came and he walked out on the plain to feed that he found there was no longer any grass to be had. He wandered about for an hour on this coat of ice, becoming more and more hungry and anxious when he could not get at the feed. Twice he pawed in an effort to get at the

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buffalo grass, but his hoofs made only slight scratches on the solid covering of ice.

On looking down the valley south of him, Tornado Boy saw a herd of Longhorn cattle walking and lowing and searching like himself for a way to get at the grass, only to find that search was futile.

The sky was filled with low-hanging clouds and a bitter north wind howled ceaselessly over the icy wastes. By mid-afternoon Tornado Boy had covered a dozen miles in his desperate search for the hidden grass. On all sides of him now he saw small herds of Longhorn cattle, some of them very near and some of them far. Just west of him were several thousand of them trailing along at the base of a long ridge of hills, and always the cattle were walking slowly, putting their heads down in bewilderment to look at the strange coating of ice, then moving on again, lowing, and suffering with the pains of beginning starvation.

That night Tornado Boy huddled up in a dense thicket of tall, dead sunflower stalks. It was a night of black darkness with the cold

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wind howling and hissing through the dead stalks around him. The night passed and he was out with the dawn, again walking over the ice-covered grass, desperate with hunger. Three days of this went by and Tornado Boy tasted not a bite of feed. Thousands of cattle, starving and hurrying across the frozen cover, were moving over valleys and struggling up among the rocks of the bluff sides. Their lowing and bawling now arose on all sides, filling valleys and plains with a requiem of coming death. To add to their trouble, the wind became colder and colder and on the fourth day a gale began rushing and shrieking down from the north, and late in the evening it changed into a howling snow storm.

Just as the storm struck, Tornado Boy, by his keen instinct, found an odd shelter. Desperate like the cattle, and wandering along with a herd of them, he had just reached the base of a high ridge of bluffs that arose above the plain between him and a small stream. He trotted around on the east side of the ridge while the cattle moved along the west. Walking close to the hill, Tornado Boy was aware

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all at once of two things. In spite of the rapidly coming night and flying snow, he realized that there was a covering over him, and at the same time he knew his feet were striking the ground and not the ice. It was so dark now he could not see, but instantly he put his nose down and began pulling up buffalo grass, in his haste getting some earth with the grass, but not realizing it. He wandered on for perhaps twenty rods, came to some earth and stones that obstructed him, turned back and so fed until he came to the other end of the sheltered nook. Tornado Boy had come to what was known by cattle-men as Goose Neck Ridge. In the middle of the Neck was a wide, jutting ledge of rock, while the bluff curved around to the north, thus making a short stretch of grass that was frequently protected from the rain and snow, especially when these storms came from the north or the west.

For three days and nights the storm roared on. Finally, the skies cleared, and a knifing wind moved sullenly down across the snowy wastes. The cattle began to die by the thou-

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sands. Horses, also, caught out on the range, too weak to search longer for feed, fell helpless in the low gorges and ravines, starving and freezing, until death mercifully put an end to their suffering.

For two days Tornado Boy fed on the small plot of sheltered buffalo grass, biting off the last vestige of it flush with the frozen ground. Then, when there was no more grass here, hunger drove him out in the wild, sullen wilderness to search for any feed that would keep life in his body. He traveled until nearly nightfall, when he beheld ahead of him a house and a number of buildings. This was the Lone Creek Ranch, where a badly discouraged cattleman had already lost his entire herd. One pitifully small stack of hay stood between his few range horses and starvation. When Tornado Boy came up and began to eat ravenously of the hay, the man, coming out of a stable, saw him. He seized a club and hurled it, striking Tornado Boy hard in the side. At the same time he shouted at him to be gone, the while bemoaning the fact that he was compelled to do this, and berating

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creation in general for the storm of ill luck that had come upon him.

Tornado Boy swerved aside with the pain, but so hungry was he that he still stood feeding ravenously, finding it hard to leave this thing of life. At this the ranchman seized a big cattle whip, leaped upon a horse and drove Tornado Boy across the sullen wintry plain, cutting him severely with the lash of the whip.

When the rider turned back night was coming on. Tornado Boy plodded across the plain, his breath coming in long, hard gasps, and his legs trembling, so that he staggered from side to side on the frozen snow. Once he slipped on a protruding, icy rock and went down so hard the breath was for a moment knocked from him, and but for the snow breaking his fall, he might never have gotten up. As it was, his body crushed the heavy crust, causing it to yield a little. He lay in the depression and at first did not try to get up. But the driving wind cut to the bone and Tornado Boy fought to escape it. He struggled and floundered about, partly crushing

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the frozen snow crust over a large space before he finally stood up. Again on his feet, strength came to his iron spirit. He started forward, his brain somewhat clouded, but he still knew what he was doing, and the one purpose, to find feed, increased in him.

The night was now pitch black with a heavily clouded sky. Tornado Boy fought on across a half mile of snowy barren, stopped once, with the north wind moaning in his ears and the swirling snow causing him to blink his eyes. He stretched out his neck and sniffed the wind. Animal smell, and the smell of feed also, came to him. He could not tell where this was, for he could not see a rod beyond him, yet what he smelled was not far away and his starving hunger drove him over the frozen snow at a clumsy, staggering trot. All at once in the black darkness, he ran against a large tree. He stopped for a minute and again moved forward, but more cautiously, through the deep snow of some timber. Here many low thickets protruded up through the snow and Tornado Boy at times plunged into these and sank so deeply in the

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snow that he had to lunge and battle to get free. Then, after surging through the small timber, he found himself fairly against some kind of obstruction—he did not know what. It was a rail fence around a small stack of hay. Tornado Boy walked around the fence, sniffing eagerly at the hay and trying to reach it. He found this was impossible to do, although he walked around the place for many minutes, at times being so hungry he put his nose across the fence and whinnied, his only way of telling that he wanted the feed.

Time after time Tornado Boy reached toward the hay, and time after time he whinnied and pleaded for it. Suddenly in the darkness he turned in surprise to see a small light flare out in the night. He had not known that a small house stood near in the darkness, where the man lived who owned the hay, but as he looked, he saw the door of the house open, then it was shut with a loud noise. A man, with a lighted lantern, came walking out, his boots making crunching sounds on the frozen snow, his breath going out like clouds of steam

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as he held the lantern up to look in front of him.

Tornado Boy had only friendliness in his heart and hope for feed. He whinnied low. But to his amazement, the man, on coming near, suddenly uncoiled a cattle whip. Tornado Boy remembered the other man, and putting all of his strength forth, whirled and started off. The stinging lash cut him once, but that was all, for he trotted rapidly away. Moving along the base of a hillside, he looked back and saw the man standing and holding his lantern. This man, too, stood condemning himself and a world upside down, saying to himself that he sorely needed the hay which was so precious to his own few cows, since all flesh was starving through the cow country.

But Tornado Boy only knew a man was standing back there in the cold and darkness with a light, a man who had cut him fearfully with a long whip and who would be waiting to cut him again if he came back to the life-giving hay. So the hungry horse walked on and when he got up on a ridge, turned and looked back. There was a light shining

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steadily from a window of the house and he could see also the light from the lantern as it moved outside. Now and then he could see the darker forms of the man's legs as he walked about carrying the lantern, and more than ever it was certain the man was guarding the hay. It was time to move on, for there was no hope there.

For a long distance Tornado Boy struggled along over an almost level plain. The night was still pitch dark, and when he moved from the plain and down a slope into a draw, he found himself among some elm bushes. He stopped and began eating the twigs. As he did so, he heard low sounds not far from him, but some instinct made him understand they were not sounds from enemies and he kept on cropping at the almost lifeless feed.

Presently the clouds began leaving the sky, racing steadily for a time across the cold winter moon, and as Tornado Boy raised his head from munching the bitter twigs the moon shone clear around him. Looking above the thicket, he was at first a little anxious, then he became so much disturbed that he backed

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out and started away. He saw on one side of him in the cold moonlight, hundreds of forms of cattle, dead and dying on the frozen snow. It was the lowing of dying cattle, their peculiar roars and groans, that troubled him most. He wanted to get away from this, and moved on. A little distance away he saw more of the cattle lowing and groaning and perishing in the snow.

All at once, as Tornado Boy turned, he found himself near a once beautiful bay horse, now thin and lifeless on the frozen plain. Tornado Boy put his nose down, touched the horse, uttered a frightened sound and made off at a faster pace. He did not understand quite the full meaning of all this, yet he did know that with himself and all things around him something terrible was the matter. Hunger gnawed at his vitals and fatigue was racking his body. No matter which way he moved, he soon came upon some of the fallen cattle, and twice again within an hour he saw in the bright moonlight the forms of two horses, a gray and a sorrel, caught between these two merciless millstones working

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strangely together—the death coat of ice over the plains and the freezing wind from the north.

As Tornado Boy fought on to escape from the open, he was as weak and as poor as many a horse that went down that night, but he would not give up. If death came to him, it would almost have to take him standing, unless he stumbled, for he knew that he was too far gone to again lie down, and his instinct kept him up. Now and then he stopped, braced himself, stood and got his wind. And still, as he fought on under the freezing stars, he passed hundreds and yet more hundreds of fallen cattle. And now he saw that all these forms were very still. No sound escaped them—there was nothing but the frozen forms and the never-ceasing whirling of the snow over frozen drifts. Once Tornado Boy almost went down himself when he ran afoul of a cow nearly covered with a drift. He had no way of knowing what he had come upon here, but he had by chance stumbled upon the trail of full ten thousand head of Texas Longhorn

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cattle that had been caught in this memorable storm of ice and snow.

All that Tornado Boy knew was that he could see these silent forms often, and that he was looking on a dark, freezing world—a world of night and death. He felt very strange, strange and so unnatural, yet he was still on his feet and moving. This, and only this, he knew—and away back in his brain there was something that seemed to be telling him he was hungry—he needed feed, yet this call now seemed far away—so far away.

He fought on through the night for hours, when all at once a dim light loomed ahead of him. He approached it, coming upon a high frozen drift on the south. It proved to be a ranchman's log cabin, and this man had also lost all save the milch cows. These were in the stable a little north of the house and what hay there was lay in a small near-by enclosure. Tornado Boy did not scent the hay, and he sought here only shelter from the biting north wind. He stumbled over the drift and brought up against the logs of the house on the south side. Here he crowded close against the shel-

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ter and got out of the knifing wind, but the snow where he had broken through near the house was up to his flanks, and he kept moving and stamping his feet as the frost pains struck him.

Here a strange thing happened. Jeanette Eagle, the young daughter of the ranchman, was sitting up before the fire nursing an ear-ache. The pain in Jeanette's ear was subsiding and she was just considering whether or not she should blow out the coal-oil lamp, that stood on a table beside the south window, and go to bed. Then, all of a sudden, she saw the form of a horse pressed almost against the window panes. Jeanette looked close, and she could see only a little of that wasted form. But this terrible winter on all flesh—she knew! She got quickly to her feet and listened for a moment for any signs of her father waking. He was sleeping in an adjoining room. After listening, Jeanette was sure he had not heard. She quickly lighted a lantern, and already fully dressed as she was, threw a coat around her and opened the door. It seemed to creak

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terribly with the frost, but she closed it and walked over the frozen drift around the house. The wind cut like fire as Jeanette held the lantern to look at the starving Tornado Boy.

"Oh! You poor horse!" she breathed low. "You're starving like all the others and I cannot help you—you poor, poor thing!"

Jeanette held the light close to his head. Tornado Boy did not seem afraid, but turned and looked at her. It was Tornado Boy's suffering eyes that put an idea in the girl's head. She ran back, opened the creaking door and almost breathlessly closed it. She thought she heard a sound where her father was sleeping and in misery she stood still, not daring to move for fear of arousing him. But nothing happened. Jeanette blew out the lantern, went quickly to the bread box where that day she had put two pans of corn bread of her own baking. She took one of the big loaves and stole over to the window. She pushed the lamp to the far end of the table and slowly raised the sash. A blast of cold air rushed in. Tornado Boy turned and tim-

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idly put his head in at the window. Jeanette started a little at this, but looking with eyes like a frightened doe at the door of her father's room, she broke up the loaf of corn bread and let Tornado Boy eat it all from the table. It was rather soft feed for him and he chewed with that peculiar movement of his head that a horse does in eating bread, but he ate all of it, and Jeanette patted him and whispered to him as she closed the window and lay down on her couch. She felt she had done a little for him and hoped he would get away now before her father found him.

But after Tornado Boy had eaten the corn bread, he blew hard enough through his nose a number of times to clear an itching from his nostrils. This awakened Jeanette's father. He quickly got the lantern and went out. Tornado Boy was crowding close to his shelter, when he saw, not the girl, but a man lashing at him with a cattle whip and shouting for him to be off.

Jeanette Eagle, the while, lay on her couch, a mist in her eyes. And Tornado Boy stumbled on. He could not understand this

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strange conduct of two human beings. One was so kind and fed him, the other lashed him so terribly. Puzzled and hurt, he pushed on through the drifts and the night.

Chapter XIV

THE DRIFT WITH THE STORM

FIGHTING on through the wind and darkness, Tornado Boy stumbled into a canyon leading west. And, although the snow was piled high in places on the bottom of the gorge, he found he was able to make progress by walking in a winding trail around the higher drifts. In this fashion he kept threading his way westward in the canyon. The reason he kept moving was that the canyon where he had entered had sloping, barren sides and so did not screen the knifing wind from him. He was searching for a wind-break.

After plodding along for many minutes, he rounded a sharp turn in the canyon and there halted under a precipitous rocky wall, on the top of which grew three giant pines, all leaning far out over the precipice. Tornado Boy got as close as he could to the rocky wall and for the first time the cutting wind did not

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strike him. Miserable in these wild surroundings, he looked all about him and once glanced upward. The three leaning pines above loomed dark and lonely against the pale starlight. Small clouds floated restlessly across the sky; and the wind, moaning ceaselessly from above, drove a cloud of fine snow swirling down, that caused Tornado Boy to drop his head. Now and then a gust of wind whipped around the corner of the wall to cut him like a knife, and every now and then the wind rushed through the canyon with blasts of snow, hissing and moaning in the freezing night.

It was near the morning hours, yet still very dark, when Tornado Boy, shaking with the cold, suddenly raised his head to listen. It was snowing again and the wind was still whirling the cutting powder from the drifts. Above the sounds made by the wind, Tornado Boy heard something that he knew was not of the storm. It was to the west of him, a little up the canyon. Time after time came the sound. At first, Tornado Boy was afraid, but when it came the third time, he lost most of his fear and was deeply curious. It was not

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the sound of a wolf. Instinct would instantly have warned him of that. And it was instinct now that made him feel he did not need to be afraid. He walked out a little and pointed his nose up the canyon. Around the curve of the high rocky wall a gust of wind brought two scents to his nose. His sense of smell was not as acute as a dog's, but good enough for him to get them both. One was the man scent, the other was that of a dog.

Tornado Boy's experiences with dogs had been limited. Yet from the time when he was a little colt he had seen one now and then passing with horsemen, and he had never been made afraid of them. He could not understand fully the sounds he heard around the turn, yet some instinct made him sense that something friendly was there. Again came the sound of a dog—a low, pleading, suffering cry,—then it ceased, and again it came. Suddenly Tornado Boy felt something like fear. The low, whining cry of the dog was coming toward him. Then peering down in the darkness, he saw dimly the form slowly coming, working his way through the cold and the

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snow. Tornado Boy was uneasy and watched closely. The dog came within ten feet and stopped and cried again. Tornado Boy held his head down close to the snow and whinnied. Instinct made both the collie dog and the horse feel that they were kindred spirits here.

Tornado Boy took a step forward, then another, his head low. He accepted it all as a matter of friendship, and held his head low while the collie cried again and again. Perhaps the collie knew that men and horses were much together and so thought of human aid when he scented the horse. At any rate the dog seemed to want Tornado Boy to come with him and Tornado Boy wanted to follow. He moved closely behind the big collie, until they came around a sharp curve in the canyon and stood over something under the jutting rocky ledge there. Tornado Boy had come slowly, curiously, up. He now started back once, then again, but the third time put his nose timidly on the form of a man—a man, cold, forever silent, like the dead, gray rocks of the canyon walls. The day broke, and Tornado Boy was

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still standing beside the silent form of the man and the starving collie.

After the sick and wandering young trapper had perished in the wilds of a fearful winter here, the dog had remained two days and two nights, eating only the scanty food that was left. But the morning light now seemed to call the sufferers away—away to battle and struggle through the biting wind—wind that seemed to seek out every nook and crevice in the canyon, rushing, and howling, while with it all came a steady, sullen roar that sent the snow flying from above into the gorge, filling it deeper and deeper with icy death.

Near the mouth of the canyon, where it dropped away on the plains, there was a thin belt of cottonwood trees; here Tornado Boy stopped to begin eating off the buds and frozen twigs as high as he could reach them. The collie looked at him, and seeming to understand, got close to the tree and there stood like a gaunt shadow of life while he waited. After a time he looked up at Tornado Boy and whined. Tornado Boy put his

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nose down close to the dog and softly nickered, then, while he chewed the last of the twigs that he could reach, he started off across the dreary wastes—he and the dog moving side by side.

They wandered on for miles, neither of them apparently having any particular aim as to direction. And still they moved on and on, across the white expanse, now over low bluffs, now across frowning snow-covered plains, and when the evening came, they were still both searching, longing, crying for food and finding none. There was feed in plenty for the dog if he had come upon the carcasses of frozen cattle, but the nearest of these now lay far to the south.

As the evening shadows gathered under a cloudy sky they both stopped by a common impulse. A lone thicket stood in the center of a little valley and for miles around this there was no other cover. Tornado Boy pushed into the thicket first, and the collie, in misery, crept in behind him. The darkness fell quickly and the wild night wind howled down the little valley, sending blasts of snow rush-

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ing across the drifts, and driving hard against the small thicket on the plain. Tornado Boy was so weak and weary that he lay down on the snow and twigs in the thicket. The collie crept up close, stepped carefully in and lay down close to Tornado Boy. Sharp quiverings now and then shot through them both when the icy wind cut into them.

All of a sudden a fiercer blast shot through the thicket that was like the hand of death itself, and with it an awful roar. Both Tornado Boy and the collie raised their heads in apprehension, and both got to their feet. At this moment, there came the blinding, charging rush of a blizzard, and with it a mass of running, bawling cattle—cattle that had still escaped the fury of the winter. Tornado Boy and the collie both started with the storm. They heard now the roar and bellow of thousands of Longhorns rushing down behind and on both sides of them. The first storm had been bad, but nothing like this. The snow was a vast, whipping, stinging, blinding thing of death. The bellowing of the cattle increased as they came on in the fearful storm.



On and on Tornado Boy and the collie ran



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On and on Tornado Boy and the collie ran, somehow keeping close together. Now and then there came with the sounds of the roaring cattle the plaintive, high-pitched, pleading cries of the calves. All at once Tornado Boy was jostled by some cows, one of them a mother, her calf struggling to keep up and bawling piteously as it came. The mother, with ice in her nose and eyes, moaned and turned to her calf time after time. At last the calf floundered and fell. The mother, blind from the snow, her nose frozen, hunted with wandering brain for her offspring, stumbled into a snow-filled coulee and did not arise. Tornado Boy also floundered in the treacherous draw, but he got to his feet and fought on, the collie now always close behind.

In the early hours of the morning the blizzard ceased, but the wind-god came moaning and sighing across the drifts and desolate wastes. No sun could be seen, for dark, leaden clouds overspread the sky, rolling and frowning on the whiteness of a frozen world. Tornado Boy and the collie huddled together, standing among some small bushes.

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With the passing hours the day became darker, sleet began spitting down, and the moaning of the wind did not cease. The collie whimpered and crowded closer to Tornado Boy. The horse uttered a low groan as he held his head down to the dog. Their language was understood between them and they both knew what they wanted, but they could do nothing to get free from the misery and pain. Night fell and the cold increased. They could no longer endure their poor shelter. Tornado Boy started out, the collie following, their heads away from the wind—if only they could get out of the freezing wind!

Chapter XV

IN COW CAVE

LEADING off a rocky trail that led down from some high wooded hills there was what was known, among the cattlemen, as Cow Cave. This was a large natural pocket, some twelve feet in height and width at the opening, and leading back perhaps twenty or more feet into the hillside. A number of the cattlemen had more than once seen the tracks of bears on the gravelly bottom of the cave, and it got its name from the fact that the carcass of a cow was once found here partly eaten, either by gray wolves or a bear, as the tracks of both were seen in the cave at the time.

It happened that on this night a particular grizzly known as Old Griz was out seeking feed. He had scorned for years to hibernate or "hole up," as the cowmen term it, and with his cunning brain and dangerous temper moved whithersoever he would, taking toll of any four-footed creature he might come

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upon. So while the winter wind howled and moaned across the wilderness of death, the big bear ambled down along the trail toward the lowlands. The wind whipping down, and rushing and changing, and rushing again, had brought to his nostrils the faintest of scents from a dozen cows that had fallen and frozen near the head of the Little Pine Gorge, far down on the bottoms. The ledge along which the big bear now traveled was in a few places covered with mounds and drifts of constantly blowing snow, but he launched his bulk through these with little effort, uttering low, savage growls as he moved down toward the darker gloom of the Little Pine. Now and then there came a sharp rush of the wind that blew the long grizzled hair up on the big bear's sides, and in spite of his tough skin, cut him sharply. He did not like this and his temper became worse as he heaved his bulk down the trail.

Once he stopped, and with the wind and snow blowing in his face, pointed his nose out to catch again that faint scent of frozen cattle. Once he got it; then a gust of wind whipped

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and surged around, striking him from another direction, and he could smell nothing. Growling and uttering at times a peculiar grunting cough, he started on again. Just as he was passing the dark opening of Cow Cave, an unusually violent gust of wind blew up from the trail a little below. A fresh scent struck the beast's nose and at the same time he heard the faint click of hard hoof beats that struck a portion of the barren, rocky trail below. With sinister cunning, the grizzly shot into the opening of Cow Cave, ran back to the rear wall, and there on the bare earth and gravel he sat, staring at the opening with his cruel, pig-like eyes, and waited. No matter what passed or entered, he was master of all four-footed things. He cocked up his small ears to catch the faintest sound. Outside was the unceasing roar of the wind, and nothing more. Then faintly, mysteriously, came the low whining cry of a dog, barely audible, and with it the groan of a horse.

Tornado Boy, having seen the darker shadows of the pines on the hills, was struggling on toward the trees for shelter, and the

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collie followed close behind. Now and then the dog had to leap and spring over frozen lumps of snow kicked up by Tornado Boy as he plowed through the drifts. Then they came upon the somewhat easier going of the rocky trail on the winding ledge, which, except for smaller drifts here and there, was swept bare of snow. At times, when the rocky ledge widened, as it often did, the collie walked up beside Tornado Boy, sometimes so closely that their heads almost touched one another. And often they both shut their eyes and gasped when the wind drove blasts of cutting snow in their faces.

Now a dangerous thing happened. When Tornado Boy came opposite Cow Cave, the wind was blowing a gale against him straight into the opening so that neither he nor the collie got the slightest warning of the grizzly's presence inside. A longed-for shelter at last had appeared, and when Tornado Boy came up he was suffering so intensely from the cold that he did not even hesitate. Yet even in his overwhelming desire to get out of the storm, he did not rush—he walked in, a little

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curious and suspicious because of the black darkness within. Although the collie was behind, his sharper nose got the scent first. He uttered a loud, frightened snarl so sharply that Tornado Boy was startled, and this was all that saved him. He lunged back, at the same time getting the grizzly's smell, and in terror sprang toward the opening of the cave. The bear rushed like a cat across the twenty feet to the opening and with amazing quickness reached it.

By a violent quick turn Tornado Boy escaped the first rush of the grizzly and was out of the cave, but he became dangerously confused on the narrow trail. He had nearly fallen. The grizzly was also confused by a snarl behind him as the collie leaped and slashed him in a hind leg. At this instant Tornado Boy leaped hard between the wall and the bear, plunged through, knocked the grizzly from the ledge, and by a strange chance struck the collie also, causing him to go over with the bear. They plunged down ten feet, striking in some four feet of snow on another ledge, the collie falling just behind

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the grizzly. The bear, however, tumbled over this ledge also and fell directly below into a narrow gorge filled with twenty feet of snow.

Tornado Boy, desperately frightened, leaped like a frightened deer, his long legs striking through the snow crust as he plunged down the rocky trail. The collie was up instantly and, leaping on top of frozen drifts, regained the trail. Both of them could hear the muffled, coughing groans of the grizzly as he wallowed and plowed through the sea of snow down the gorge, until at last, as they hurried on, the roar of the wind drowned out all other sounds. They surged forward through the drifts until Tornado Boy plunged into the dense brush along a creek bank. Here he stopped, the collie moving in close under the thick-set cover with him.

The remaining hours of the night dragged by. With the dawn Tornado Boy moved out and began eagerly eating the green buds and twigs of some near-by cottonwoods. The collie dug down in the snow to some withered leaves under the brush and lay down. Tornado Boy did not move more than a dozen

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rods during the day and he ate all the twigs and buds he could reach on the few cottonwoods.

It was a day with cloudy skies. About the natural time for sunset, Tornado Boy and the collie were suddenly startled by the figure of a rider coming up at a gallop over some wind-swept barren ground from the bottoms below.

Robert MacGregor, the cowman, with his shock of red hair and bushy red beard, pulled up his horse in surprise when he reached the thicket. A look of pity swept over his face.

"Well, now!" he exclaimed, "you poor starving things! But as for you, doggie, there's much feed in the carcasses of cattle and horses, only you'd be starved before you found them. Come, collie! I'll take you home and there'll be a plenty for you." MacGregor had dismounted and was patting the collie, which came up to him instantly.

"As for you, my poor beastie," he said to Tornado Boy, "you've lived this long and you may somehow yet make it—it's awful for you, but I have not even enough feed for my own."

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Tornado Boy was in some fear of this man because of recent experiences with others. He did not follow but moved farther away to some brush and scattering cottonwoods along a stream.

As the fearfully thin gelding walked away MacGregor looked after him and said, "Good-by, you poor beastie, I hope you make it."

The dog, following the cowman, dragged himself for a time across the snow until he could go no farther. MacGregor dismounted, lifted the dog upon the horse, held him, and rode on toward the south.

The wind, in places, had swept some shelving ground bare of snow, but as if to mock all horses, there was no grass on these barren places—nothing but shale and cold, flat stones that now rattled and clattered under the hoofs of MacGregor's mount. The man galloped on through the gathering night, heading toward a small, gleaming light to the southward.

And as MacGregor rode on he heard far behind him, borne down on the cold wind of the night, the loud, wild whinny of a horse—

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and again it came, although it grew farther and farther away, and fainter, and fainter still. The man galloped steadily nearer to the light shining from the window of his house. Arrived here, he put his horse in the crude stable behind the house. A moment later he opened the door of his home and set the collie down. His wife came up and said, "Now, what's the meaning of this, Robert?" But she added quickly, "Something else starving—everything is starving and freezing."

"Yes," said MacGregor, "a starving doggie that we can help, but I had to leave the gentle blue horse that was starving and freezing with the dog. The collie can live on the meat of the cattle, but that poor blue horse by the river—I reckon will go down soon."

This family, father, mother and one child, were soon in bed and asleep. About midnight, when the wind shrieked around the corners of the house, MacGregor was awakened by a distant neighing—the sound coming from the river. He knew it must be the blue horse. At the same time his child, Willie, a boy of ten, awakened by his side. He, too, heard the

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distant neigh and he knew what it meant, for he had seen the cattle and horses passing the place and dying in the storms.

"Father, I hear a horse calling," said Willie. "I hate to hear him call. He's calling for feed—I wish we could feed him—it's awful for him to be out there."

"There, there, Willie," said MacGregor. "He's down by the river in the cottonwoods where he may eat the buds from the trees. Go to sleep, child—I promise I'll go down in the morning and see how it goes with him—I'll cut down the trees so that he can eat more of the buds."

Willie listened with wide eyes. Again he heard the distant neigh, and so did Robert MacGregor, but the horse was going farther and farther away.

Chapter XVI

THE POISON WEED

SPRING had come. The first shoots of green grasses were pushing up along hillsides and plains, and in particular there were many low green stretches along the valley of the Wild Horse.

It was late in the afternoon when brief splashing sounds broke the stillness, and Tornado Boy waded briskly across the narrow Wild Horse River and came out in the open valley. At once he stopped and began feeding on the short, green grass. For days he had wandered here and there, halting when he found one of the greenest spots on the low-lying valley. As Tornado Boy fed, he moved slowly forward, now and then nosing around at a small, innocent-looking weed—one that in each instance grew in the lowest spot among the grasses. Cropping the grass, he moved slowly along. He was very thin and always hungry. All at once, he found one of the short

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weeds in his mouth. It had not quite the good taste of the grass, being more dry and having a slight tang to it, but it was green, and being mingled with a large mouthful of grass as it was, Tornado Boy swallowed the mouthful, weed and all, and went on eagerly cropping the grass beyond. Then again, in his eager feeding, he got another of these weeds with a large mouthful of grass and again he was so hungry that he swallowed it. But when, a little farther on, he came to still another of the silent green things, he sniffed it and moved away. Instinct now began to work in him, but unfortunately and strangely enough, instinct had given him no warning of this weed until he had twice eaten of it. Warning now came because there was the faintest sort of an unnatural feeling in him. It was so slight at first that he still fed on the grass, but when a little later he passed across a level stretch of ground to drink from the Wild Horse River he felt a sharp stab in his stomach, and he staggered when a terrific pain streaked through his head. Red and yellow spots danced before his eyes, blinding him. In-

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stinctively he tried to keep on his feet, but instead he lurched sidewise and fell hard to the ground. For a long time he lay with the pains shooting through him, the yellow and red spots glimmering before his eyes.

Darkness fell in profound silence, with the stars looking down in the hush. Presently, as the dews of night overspread the grass, there sounded the melancholy chirp of a sleepy cricket. After a time the lone cricket ceased his song and there came again a brooding silence. Presently the cricket crawled along until it came to Tornado Boy, then hopped upon him, moving along his back until it dropped again to the grass. But Tornado Boy did not know. A nighthawk swooped low, uttering its discordant cry, but Tornado Boy did not move. There was a dull ringing in his ears and a strange, faint feeling came over him. He raised his head and put forth his forelegs to get up, but he was so blind and sick that he fell back. At last, when the deeper coolness of the night came down, Nature carried him away in a strange and dreaming sleep. And as the hours

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of the darkness passed Tornado Boy knew nothing.

Once he was stirred almost into wakefulness when dull thumping sounds broke the still air as a horseman rode at a gallop down the valley near the bluffs. But Tornado Boy was only half awake, and he dreamed that he was again struggling to pull a wagon, and the sounds seemed to be the thumping and chucking of the wheels as he pulled the weight along. He thought he was again pressing against the collar that held him. A man, with the ever-ready whip, was again behind him, shouting at him and driving him forward. And then all things faded from him, and he rested for a time in a land of dreamless sleep, his thin, wasted body rising and falling in regular breathing as he lay under the starry sky.

If Tornado Boy had been well and awake, he would have had an instinctive fear. Something would have warned him to hunt shelter quickly, for a great black cloud was fast coming up from the northwest. At first, there came a fresh, cool gust of wind that stirred

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every shoot of grass in the valley; but the cool fresh wind, with its smell of rain, was only the more comforting to the horse's fevered brain, and he slept on.

The cloud rolled up swiftly and deep darkness covered the land. A steady muttering and grumbling sounded in the northern sky and a warning hush spread over the earth. A few large drops of rain fell pelting on the ground, and again the hush returned. Quivering sheets of flame danced along above the hills on the north, and the rumble of thunder was now mingled with a roar that grew steadily louder as the sheets of driving rain rushed southward.

So weak and sick was Tornado Boy, that he did not awaken until the downpour struck him. He got to his feet in the driving sheets of water and started toward a belt of timber. Once he lunged into a vast area of wild plum thickets that struck him around the body. He struggled through them, scratching his legs painfully.

On reaching the cover of the woods, he stopped. The timber broke the wind, but the

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rain still beat upon him. There was nothing more that he could do, so he stood here shivering in the wet and cold.

All night the rain pelted down. When morning came, the sun arose in a clear sky. Tornado Boy had chilled through the night, and although the poison was leaving him, he was now very ill. He walked slowly from the thicket, his head almost touching the ground, his eyes closed. His chest seemed stopped, he breathed rapidly and his fever was so high he did not know what he was doing. Out on the prairie at the edge of the woods, he fell on his side. Here he stayed, slightly moving his front legs.

The drenched valley lay silent under the early spring sun. There was no sign of life on the long plain, except now and then the grayish flash of a meadow lark flying over the ground, to alight on the thickset twigs of a wild plum thicket. Sighing sounds came with Tornado Boy's breathing and sometimes he took a long breath, trying to make the pains in his chest go away, but they would not—and again he breathed rapidly.

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As the time dragged, Nature battled in his favor, and the second night he got to his feet and drank long of the cool waters of the Wild Horse. The next day he ate a little grass; and from then on he began to feed and slowly gain in strength.

Six days and nights passed. Tornado Boy was now feeding in a valley under the brow of a hill where there was a small, tinkling spring. The grass was unusually good here. He would feed until he grew very tired, when he would lie down for sleep. Sometimes he lay out on the plain, and sometimes, after drinking at the spring, he would drop down near it and sleep for one or two hours.

All the little valley here, the hill and the woods to the west, were very still and peaceful, as if Nature herself were laying kindly hands over the place. The sky remained a deep blue each day, without even a cloud save those hovering on the horizon at sunset.

Tornado Boy's hunger was never satisfied. But often, as he fed, he raised his head while munching a mouthful to look with eager eyes, now up the hill, now north and south, and

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again intently toward the far-sweeping plains in the west. Sometimes he uttered a sound that was not quite a whinny. It was more a low half-sigh, half-moan. He uttered the sound when, after looking, he began feeding again.

It was on the evening of the sixth day. The sun was sinking blood-red behind a dark cloud bank in the west. Tornado Boy again felt very tired from long standing while feeding; and after drinking from the spring, he walked out on the valley where there was some tall withered bunch grass. On this, for a bed, he lay down and stretched out, his head resting on a heavy tuft of grass. If he had been in full strength and perfect health, he would have lain down with his head up and dozed in that way, but ever since he had been ill, he had lain at full length when he slept.

After sleeping for a time, Tornado Boy raised his head once and looked about him as if something had disturbed him; but there was nothing to be seen and no sound broke the evening stillness. He could see the hill on the north of him and a long line of woods

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to the south all standing like sentinels of peace. Seemingly satisfied that there was no danger here, he again laid his head down, and as the shadows of evening stole across the plains, he fell sound asleep.

The hours passed; dawn was coming. In the darkness that still covered the plains, Tornado Boy slept on, and did not hear the strange sounds far in the west—sounds of the most violent turmoil and confusion. First, a faint, but steady roar, the bawling of an awful sweeping avalanche of thousands of half-wild Longhorn cattle; and now and then, faint but certain, came the sharp, piercing tones of shouting men; and at last the lightning-like pop of guns and revolvers near the head of the stampeding herd.

But it was so far away as yet and so faint, and Tornado Boy was so weary, with his weak body calling for rest, that he slept on as peacefully as a child. Yet the threatening roar was coming, coming, an avalanche of doom across the plains.

Chapter XVII

CAUGHT WITH THE LONGHORNS

THE long line of cattle was strung out across the plains moving slowly, steadily toward the northeast. It was a herd several hundred yards in width and more than two miles long, containing one of the largest droves of Long-horn cattle ever driven across the West, fully ten thousand head.

Jim McDougal, celebrated in the Old West as an expert with cattle and a tamer of horses, rode at the head of the vast herd, while fifty cowboys strung out on either side. Behind came the cattle boss, an extra *remuda* of horses, and the cook wagon, some distance in the rear. At this juncture the horses drawing the camp wagon were urged into a trot, and on reaching a point halfway along the herd of cattle, the cook turned off at an angle toward some timber he could see near a ridge of hills in the distance.

It was now late in the afternoon and time

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therefore when the cook should prepare supper for Jim McDougal and nearly threescore other men, so he hurried on to select the camping place.

The great herd was moving slowly, for the cattle were weary with many days of steady travel. Jim looked with mild interest as he heard the clatter of the wagon and saw the cook driving at a trot toward the line of trees near the hills.

A little farther on trouble came. Jim rode his horse to the edge of a wide stretch of sand and its small stream, known as the Big Sandy. He started across and the foremost cattle followed; but when halfway over, they began to move around in a circle, with the result that the whole herd packed and massed together until some of them mired down. By the persistent efforts of Jim and the other cowboys, the cattle were gotten out and into the open valley beyond; but it was then late in the afternoon, and as the cattle were already nervous, it was decided to bed them down in the valley where they were. And this in spite of the fact that it was not where Jim had

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wanted to hold them. He had been trying to get them to a hollow basin a mile farther away where they might be more easily watched. Until now the cowboys had been very fortunate, and there had been no trouble during the nights since the great herd had started from the south. Jim believed this place would do, although they were some distance from camp.

When the cattle were at last brought to a stand on the plain, Jim McDougal, sitting his horse north of them, put his field glasses to his eyes and swept the land ahead of him. He saw nothing that he thought was likely to bring trouble and was about to put up his glasses and go over to the cook wagon for a bit of supper when his attention was attracted to something. Was it the head of a horse—a horse lying prone in the rather high bunch grass? The shadows of evening were so dark that Jim could not tell.

"Well!" he exclaimed. "He's asleep, I reckon, if it *is* a horse. Got his head down flat on the ground. Must be awful tired; maybe he's sick. Maybe it's something else." And

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then suddenly came to Jim a wild hope. But the hope fled. "No," he said bitterly, "it couldn't be *him*. And likely not a horse at all." Jim put up his field glasses and turned his mind for the night on the heavy responsibility that rested upon him. He thought to himself that when daylight came he would ride out toward the bluffs on the north and see if there was a horse in sight there.

Night fell. A mist-like veil dimmed the stars, and it was especially dark in the valley where the cattle had been halted for the night.

Jim McDougal rode entirely around the herd and then, planning with his boss, made arrangements for the night shifts among the riders, according to regular custom on these long drives across the plains. Generally, when all seemed well, Jim himself did not take the first watch, but rolled up in his blanket, leaving orders to awaken him about the middle of the night, when he would get up and ride with the second shift until daylight.

But for some reason on this night, Jim was restless and remained up to ride with the first watch. Perhaps this was because he had more

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than five times as many cattle as were usually driven in a single herd on the long march from Texas.

Some of the cowboys were soon rolled up in their blankets, sleeping soundly, their horses on picket ropes near by—and all seemed well on the plain.

Hour after hour went by. It was still dark, but almost dawn when one of the strangest things of all the dramatic events of the Old Western cattle trail happened. It might have been well nigh unbelievable to men except those who drove these cattle and who were a part of that singular event.

As has been stated, it was still quite dark in the small valley where the thousands of cattle stood, with Jim McDougal and the other cowboys riding around them. Not far to the north of the valley, there was a tall, sharp ridge of hills, in the center of which was a deep cleft or defile. For a moment only, the darkness and deep stillness lay on the valley and cattle. Then, in the most profound silence, a huge, blood-red moon pushed up its face to the west of the cut in the hill

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and looked over the valley. Strange as it may seem, this threw the nervous Longhorns into the wildest fear. It was as if some awful fiery demon, bent on their destruction, had suddenly raised his head to look at them from the hill.

At first there came the sudden cracking of thousands of hoofs and horns, then followed a frightened roaring and bawling, as the whole herd surged forward. Jim McDougal was caught in a bunch of steers on the east of the herd when it started. There had been no time to awaken the first shift of cowboys, but these, hearing the roar and din, were quickly awake and in their saddles, trying hard to ride ahead and stop the crazed cattle.

The foremost steers in the herd swept straight toward the north, the whole mass surging in behind them. On they plunged, bellowing, bawling, roaring—a veritable bedlam of living things—and then the leaders struck the defile in the hills. This proved to be some three hundred yards through and less than a quarter of a mile wide. The cattle were massed in this place, many of them being

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crushed against the rocky walls on either side. But the main herd plunged through, while the cowboys, by skillful maneuvering, rode out on either side—Jim McDougal with those on the east—and on up the bluffs, to ride again down through the rough land on the other side.

On and on these fear-crazed Longhorns ran, and still on when the dawn came. Suddenly in these first gray streaks a long, abrupt, rocky declivity loomed ahead. It was many yards long and at least ten feet down. The leaders of the herd were unable to halt or turn because of the rushing mass behind them. The foremost cattle plunged from the cliff to fall and be trampled by the thousands behind them. Many of these also fell, at last filling the place to the top of the cliff while thousands behind rushed up to stumble and plunge and roll down over the mass of bodies.

They were still running, bawling, red-eyed, foaming at the mouth, when, in the daylight, Jim McDougal, riding near the head of the herd, saw, through the dust, the form of a blue-colored horse caught in the front of the

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herd. He seemed to be raised high at the moment as if his forelegs were on the back of a steer. It looked as if he must be thrown and trampled to death.

Understanding of it all flashed through him. It was Tornado Boy! It *was* the head and neck of Tornado Boy that Jim had seen when Tornado Boy was sleeping! "He must have been ill," Jim thought, "and so he was caught in the dangerous rush and all this time he had been forced to run in the wild mêlée!" How he had remained on his feet and escaped being trampled was a wonder, and probably he was already badly wounded from the horns.

But it was Tornado Boy! and Jim was overwhelmed with a desire to save him. Forgetting all else, he drove in with all his might, lashing and yelling in a desperate effort to cut in among the cattle and get Tornado Boy into the clear.

Chapter XVIII

THE RUSH OF THE TEN THOUSAND

WHEN the noise of the rushing cattle awakened Tornado Boy, he started to his feet, amazed and bewildered at the sight of the vast mass bearing down upon him, then raced away as fast as he could toward the north. If he had been in good flesh and fully himself, he would have swept on to the hills and escaped, but in his thin and weakened condition, he had not run far when he found himself in trouble. The mass crowded upon him as he ran through the defile in the ridge, yet he swept through and ran on.

Thousands of cattle were then rushing along both to the east and west of him. Tornado Boy ran north, gained the top of a low ridge, only to find cattle still on either side and behind him, rushing and bawling, and the whole of the ridge and plain to the west seemed a wave of bedlam. Anything to escape that roaring, dust-covered, rushing sea of four-

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footed things! Tornado Boy whirled and leaped away across the short ridge, plunged down through a narrow opening between the running cattle, ran into some thickets which slowed him down, then surged on to the open, where all at once he found many cattle massed and running ahead of him. As he ran on with them, he saw, all at once, space east of him.

He checked himself, preparing to turn and slip through into the open; but as he slowed down, a heavy mass of horns bore down upon him. Badly frightened, he ran on and again found himself jammed, with his chest against two running steers. As he was slowed up a little, a crushing weight struck him from behind. He reared and at the same time the weight behind surged with such force that he almost went down. He struck out wildly with his forelegs, and for a moment was actually carried off the ground with his front legs on the back of a big steer, his hind quarters borne up by the irresistible force in his rear. For a few terrifying seconds, he was powerless while carried along by this living

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tornado. Suddenly he felt his hind legs slip and he would have been thrown and trampled had it not happened that just as his hind feet struck down there came a violent surge on the left; his front legs slipped down between two of the steers, and again he was on his feet, plunging on. As yet some angel of luck seemed to be with him, as he had received only minor scratches from the outspreading horns. It was the sudden lowering of the heads of the cattle and the surge sidewise that made the danger.

All at once the bawling mass struck a long, almost barren stretch of ground filled with fine sand. Even before this, Tornado Boy had been unable to see beyond the cattle nearest him, because of the dust; but now, as they struck the sand, it became choking. At this the already frantic cattle seemed to become more crazed than ever, and the bawls from the thousands and the thunder of hoofs shook the earth.

Tornado Boy could see nothing. His breath came hard, ending with a jerking little cry, and his nostrils burned like fire. All at once,

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he felt a racking pain on his right side. One of the long horns of a steer had raked him; but by extreme good fortune Tornado Boy was suddenly crowded up so hard between two other steers that none of the horns on either side could seriously wound him. The steers themselves had no wish to injure him. They were too crazed to be aware of his presence; and even though they had been, horses were to them familiar, friendly things. The dust was so stifling that Tornado Boy coughed and choked as they ran.

The two steers between which he was crowded suddenly lunged into a depression, and he went with them. All three nearly fell, but the surging mass behind struck with crushing force and they were impelled forward again. On all sides of him, Tornado Boy heard, with the bawling, an incessant, dull cracking as the great horns of these Texas cattle struck against one another.

In the blinding dust-cloud, the foremost steers suddenly plunged down a long incline toward a mass of rocks below; at the same time Tornado Boy was thrown violently to the

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right and again onto the dangerous horns. He uttered a wild, piercing scream as a horn ripped through the skin and went deep into the flesh of his shoulder. And again he uttered that wild, horse cry when another horn drove in as it passed him. At the same time, he was saved by an accident, for there came a violent surge against him from one side and he was thrust still farther to the east of a declivity over which the foremost cattle had fallen. The din there arose loud and pitiful as the unfortunate creatures tumbled down, to be trampled and crushed by other hundreds who rushed on over them.

Tornado Boy was crowded hard to the right. He heard the loud bellowing and roaring where the steers were rushing upon the fallen ones; but Tornado Boy did not understand the meaning of it all. He only knew he was in a desperate situation and that the pain from his several wounds was constant. The fine dust and sand seethed up from the thousands of hoofs and hovered, a stifling veil, over horse and cattle.

Suddenly, in the cloud of dust, Tornado

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Boy heard another sound and even in the turmoil, he pricked up his ears.

A wild, piercing yell it was that came, high and shrill, above the bawling of the cattle, and again it came. Instinct told Tornado Boy that this sound came from a man, and in his extremity he neighed shrilly, for it seemed to him that only a man could make matters right here.

Now the cattle passed out of the sandy ground to a wide valley and it was a lighter cloud of dust that now hovered over them. On this plain, to the right, Jim McDougal, trying hard to get to Tornado Boy, heard him neigh. Again Jim shouted and at the same time he began whipping the steers in the face on this side to turn them. For the first time, he, of all the cowboys, was up at the head of the herd.

"Swish! Pop! Crack! Crack!" A cattle whip quickly taken from the horn of the saddle jerked out its staccato in the hand of Jim McDougal.

Then Jim saw again through the dust, but only for an instant, the form of Tornado Boy

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—saw him for the instant, in spite of his thin condition, rear high and powerful as he leaped like a rocket out over a fallen steer when a mass began piling up at that point.

A little wood suddenly loomed ahead. The cattle turned to the left. Tornado Boy swerved to the right and came out of the dust-cloud free—trembling, sweating, heaving for breath. And he and Jim McDougal suddenly stood revealed to one another near the fringe of the trees. At the same moment, Jim heard many loud, wild yells to the west. Other cowmen were there and the herd had been turned. The men would now stop them in a little time.

Jim McDougal dismounted and walked straight up to Tornado Boy, who was coated with dust, and bleeding from a long, ugly wound in his shoulder. The horse, breathing hard, did not seem to be afraid, but stood quite still. Jim came up and spoke kindly; and Tornado Boy put his nose trustingly into the man's outstretched hands. Not that he remembered Jim, for probably he could not; but here was a friend. And half crying, half

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whinnying, he tried to tell Jim McDougal how hard this had all been and how he suffered from the rips and cuts of the horns.

It may be he sensed that he could not long live unless Jim helped him. And it also may be that Tornado Boy was so weak and hurt and sick that he did not much care. Be this as it may, Jim went quickly to his saddlebags and as quickly took out a "horse needle," as it was called, with the accompanying thread. Although he was only self-trained as the veterinary surgeon to the outfit, Jim was possessed of considerable skill. Getting closer, he saw the shoulder was bleeding dangerously.

The first touch of the needle was the test, for it is the skin that hurts. Jim grasped the big needle and deftly began. Tornado Boy flinched because it did hurt, but he stood and bore it. He flinched again and again as the needle swept through, but still he did not try to move away. Swiftly Jim thrust the needle in and out; then it was done and the bleeding ceased. The other cuts were not dangerous.

"Not a brand on you, Tornado Boy," said Jim, "but it looks as if something had burned

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you a little on your chest. Still, that's no brand. Now I'll see if you'll lead." And tying a rope about Tornado Boy's neck, Jim started doubtfully, but his doubts vanished when Tornado Boy, at the first indication of what was wanted, came on and walked close to Jim, the other horse following slowly.

"I see you want to keep close," said Jim. "Now that's fine," and he stopped to pat Tornado Boy affectionately on the neck.

About halfway between the little wood and the vast herd of cattle, now being held on the plain, was a small lake of water surrounded by scattering trees. Jim stood thoughtfully for a moment, then mounting his own tired horse, rode slowly toward the lake, leading Tornado Boy.

As he reached the outer fringes of the trees, a rider came out of a coulee and on to the grove. It was Bill Cumberland. He pulled up his horse, saying, "Why, hello, Jim! Mighty glad to see you. I knew you were fighting at the head of the cattle and was afraid you got hurt. Well, I declare!" Cumberland broke off suddenly as he dismounted.

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and came up. "Tornado Boy! As I live! Well, I *do declare!* He's pretty thin and pretty badly cut, too, Jim; he looks awful bad. I wonder how we'll manage, but we *must* take care of him."

"I know," said Jim, "and I was thinking of a plan."

Then Jim spoke quickly, telling how he would like to remain in the place some two weeks to get Tornado Boy in shape.

"Sure, Jim!" Cumberland said. "The very thing. We'll be back this way in about two weeks. You go right ahead and take care of him. Well! Well! Tornado Boy as sure as the world!" Then Bill Cumberland went on, "You can take some supplies from the cook wagon and when we come back we'll pick you up on the trail somewhere between here and the foothills." Bill would have said more but at this moment a steer was seen running from the herd, a cowboy riding hard after him and Cumberland rode away to help turn the steer. The cattle, still crazed with fear, were milling around and around in a vast throng on the plain.

Chapter XIX

THE TWO FRIENDS

THE next morning came with gray clouds floating restlessly across the sky and a stiff northwesterly wind whipping down across the plains. In less than an hour the last of the thousands of the Longhorns vanished in the east, and Jim McDougal stood alone with Tornado Boy in the region known as Sunset Valley.

Jim's faith in Tornado Boy was shown when he sent his other horse on with the cattle, keeping only the bridle, the saddle, and blanket, although he did not know whether or not Tornado Boy had ever been ridden.

The lake of cool, clear water here was fringed on the west by the greenest of drooping willows, while north and east there grew the most luxuriant of grasses. This lake was fed by two springs that gushed from a low bluffside, sending their clear waters down a little sandy draw to disappear under the

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overhanging willows in the wider expanse of water forming the lake.

It was noon. Jim had lovingly held the rope of Tornado Boy while he grazed on the richest grass of the valley. Now they were standing together under a giant spreading willow a little away from the bluffside from which there came the constant murmur of the two flowing springs. Horse and man seemed for the time dreaming. Tornado Boy stood dozing and in Jim's eyes was a far-away look as he gazed into the distant west. As they stood under the great willow, the wind whispered low and constantly through the myriads of quivering leaves. Along the margin of the woods near the lake bloomed the wild pogonia, and here and there near the fringes of the stream a lone calopogon on its slender stem bowed low with the whispering wind, falling and rising, and falling again.

Jim McDougal was aroused by a slight sound from Tornado Boy as the horse turned his nose toward his wounded shoulder. Jim saw that the long, ugly wound was swelling rapidly. This was cause for anxiety.

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"Come, Boy," said Jim. "Let's go down to the water with your hurt. The cold water will help it."

Tornado Boy followed as Jim started away, holding the rope. At the edge of the water Jim removed his clothing and walked out until he was waist-deep.

"Come, Boy," he said, holding out one of his hands. "Come in the cool water, come."

A brighter gleam came in Tornado Boy's eyes. He at once splashed in, and as he came up Jim stopped him and told him to stand. The cool water was now already over half of the swelling and for half an hour, though it was cold to his own body, Jim cupped his hand and bathed the shoulder. At last they turned and together moved out of the water.

At intervals Jim repeated the bathing of the shoulder until evening was come. Tornado Boy fed on the grass at times and always they were close together.

That night Jim McDougal finished his supper of bacon, bread and coffee and lay down on his blanket with Tornado Boy near by on a long lariat rope. He learned quickly

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that when he reached the end of the rope he must not try to go farther.

The next day Jim again bathed the wound and when night came he finished his supper and lay down near Tornado Boy as before.

Seven days passed and Tornado Boy's wounds were healing rapidly. Another week, and still Jim and Tornado Boy were in Sunset Valley and now only a long fresh scar told of Tornado Boy's once dangerous wound. The other cuts also had healed.

When the two weeks had passed, Jim went to a high knoll one morning and looked toward the east, wondering if his outfit was in sight. He saw no sign of them, but a little later two freighters went by in covered wagons and Jim got fresh supplies for his own needs. Knowing, as he did, that delays in driving these cattle happened, Jim grew restless. He decided he would ride along the trail toward the west and wait at the foothills.

"Your shoulder's well now, Boy," said Jim as he cautiously adjusted the saddle. "You may buck a little, yet if I don't miss my guess, you'll figure out I'm not going to hurt you,

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and you'll just be a little awkward and not buck at all. Anyway we'll see!"

Tornado Boy had rubbed his nose against Jim as the latter had come up with the saddle, and as it was eased on his back, he turned his head and regarded the odd thing curiously. He laid back his ears a little when the cinch was slowly drawn up, but Jim stopped, patted him and talked to him, then went ahead and finished tightening the cinch without any trouble. Tornado Boy was used to the bridle bit, and, although the iron thing was not pleasant in his mouth, it did not hurt after the bridle was on.

Jim was in the saddle before Tornado Boy realized it. Now he did not know what to do. He wanted to follow behind Jim, and it seemed a ridiculous thing for the man to be on his back. How could he follow? He did not know what was wanted. After long and gentle talk, Jim got him to understand, and at the end of a half hour, he was riding him around the valley. Not once had Tornado Boy given even the slightest hint that he would pitch.

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When Jim saw that Tornado Boy was so quickly broken, he wanted to be on the move. He remembered that he had told Bill Cumberland that he would be on the trail somewhere between Sunset Valley, where the outfit had left him, and the foothills of the mountains, and he remembered also that Cumberland had said, "I don't care where we pick you up, just so it's before we start into the mountains."

It was late in the afternoon one day when Jim reached the foothills and picked out an opening in the mountains where he would lead the cattle when they arrived. A little after this he rode to a high knoll, and putting his field glasses to his eyes, looked eastward.

"They're coming, Boy!" he said. "At last they're coming!"

Tornado Boy stood looking to the east, his head high, his beautiful neck arched, a light of intelligence in his large, dark eyes.

"They're coming, Boy!" repeated Jim, patting him affectionately. "They'll be with us now by sundown. There's good water below

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here. We'll wait for them, for they're heading this way."

Presently, Bill Cumberland, Bud Gorman and all hands came up. They greeted Jim and Tornado Boy with equal enthusiasm. Fondly they petted and rubbed Tornado Boy from head to foot.

"His cuts are all healed now. That's fine!" said Bud Gorman, caressing Tornado Boy. "He's fit and ready!"

Chapter XX

AT THE BRIDGE

THE next morning when the first gray streaks of dawn shone on the plain, Jim McDougal sat up to find Tornado Boy nosing him.

"Hey, Bill!" Jim called to Bill Cumberland. The boss sat up from his blankets. "Look here at Tornado Boy," said Jim, getting to his feet and vigorously patting the horse's neck. "He was right over me when I woke up!"

"Fine!" said Cumberland, and he came up to stroke Tornado Boy. "He's a mighty sensible horse, Jim, he surely is—something awful nice about a horse like that. Well," he ended, "it's time to rout all hands and start. Now we'll see how Tornado Boy holds out as a leader over the mountains. There'll be some bad places for him, but if he fails you can throw the saddle on another horse."

"He'll never fail, Bill," said Jim. "If

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there's any trouble it won't be Tornado Boy's fault."

Before sunrise the cowboys had all eaten their breakfast and the long line was started—started on one of the most romantic pastoral events in the world—driving cattle from the far-away plains of Texas to cross the mountains of the Far West.

Jim McDougal, in spite of the fact that he was still but a youth, had already three times crossed the mountains on horseback. And so after a brief consultation with Bill Cumberland and Bud Gorman, Jim was allowed to have his way about choosing a different trail and leading the cattle many miles to the south, where, he said, there was a much better way, by entering a certain pass, to cross the Rockies.

Jim McDougal, on Tornado Boy, then started and led the long line of cattle. Tornado Boy walked quietly along, his ears up and his eyes alert, looking with interest at everything ahead of him. On the west of them stood the high frowning mountains, but on the east stretched a vast sea of rolling

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plains, with here and there, in the distance, a thin line of trees where some small stream coursed its way down the eastward slopes.

For three days and three nights all went well. Then on the fourth night a vast storm cloud rolled up from the west and a torrential rain fell, sending all the near-by streams to the flood. Unfortunately, on this evening, the cattle were halted near a small stream but were not driven across because of the freshet.

Morning came with leaden skies and a miserable drizzling rain. The small creek that for several hours had been at the flood from the hard rain, began to fall rapidly, and by noon it was passable. Jim started on Tornado Boy and supposed that the cattle would follow, as was usual for them to do on such occasions. But this time they did not follow when Jim rode in the stream to lead them across. For some reason they absolutely rebelled. All afternoon it was tried, but without success. The night shut down dark and with the rain still drizzling, chilling horses and men. Again morning came with cloudy skies, but the rain had ceased. The cattle still re-

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fused to cross. Then the resourcefulness of Jim McDougal came to the rescue.

"We'll build a bridge of cottonwood logs and brush," he said, grinning good-naturedly when Cumberland doubted that it could be done. And with the aid of axes from the supply wagon the crude bridge was done by mid-afternoon—and then not a cow nor steer could be driven across it.

But still Jim grinned, and suddenly he said, "Tornado Boy and I will get them across. Now you boys all get in behind the cattle and when you see one of them start across the bridge, keep yelling 'til the whole bunch is across."

"We'll do the hollering, Jim," said Cumberland, "if you'll start the first cow. But how are you going to get that first one on that bridge?"

Jim McDougal did not speak but sat on Tornado Boy, carefully uncoiling his long lariat. As he got his rope free he said, "I'm going to rope that calf belonging to the cow near the bridge. I'll drag him across and

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when you see me and Tornado Boy on the bridge, you all start driving cattle."

Jim rode up in front of the milling cattle near the bridge. Suddenly his lariat shot out and the noose settled true over the calf's head.

"Come, Boy!" said Jim, turning Tornado Boy on the bridge, and the horse seemed to understand. Many horses would have shied at a crude thing like this across a stream, but Tornado Boy knew Jim wanted him to go out upon it, and that was enough for him. He trusted, and plunged out on the tangled mass of brush and small boughs. He was half-way across, dragging the bellowing calf that braced its front legs, pulled back and bawled uproariously. The old cow, frantic for her young, plunged after it, when of a sudden Tornado Boy sank to his knees in the treacherous brush of the bridge. It looked as if the plan were doomed to failure, for as yet only the old cow was on the bridge—not a steer had followed. Tornado Boy was still floundering. The cowboys were yelling at the cattle, but helpless to aid in the least, and the whole thing rested on the plunging blue horse out

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on the bridge. With three mighty lunges Tornado Boy struggled up to a firmer footing, and again leaped and plunged on across, still dragging the bellowing calf, the old cow bawling and following and the steers now crowding on behind her. Some of them crowded off the bridge and floundered in the brush, but that did not matter now, so long as they followed on after the old cow. And even though many were crowded off into the stream, they swam toward those already across. Soon the thing was done. When all were safely over, the cowboys set up a wild yell for Tornado Boy.

"He done it all hisself, Jim!" they yelled in delight. "We sure thought he was done when he hit that stuff!"

They looked back and wondered how it had been accomplished. The bridge was completely wrecked; most of the cattle and all the cowboys had crossed in the water.

But Tornado Boy did not know that he was being praised. He was himself again, dutifully leading the long string of cattle, pricking up his ears now at a running jack rabbit,

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now at a slinking coyote, but always mindful of the least word of command from the man on his back.

The next day, when the sun had started down toward the west behind the lofty peaks, Jim, riding in the lead, raised himself in his stirrup, turned and waved his big sombrero to Bill Cumberland, in the rear, then turned Tornado Boy into the pass of the mountains.

And still on and on Tornado Boy led, accepting without hesitation the rocky passes or stone-covered trails, when Jim gently told him he was to go on.

All rested that night in a lonely mountain valley, high among the mighty peaks, and when morning came, the blue-colored form of Tornado Boy, with Jim McDougal on his back, could be seen leading on over the strange high trail westward—and always westward. Sometimes the horse, climbing over snow-capped peaks, looked wonderingly with shining eyes into that dim and strange land of the West. He was hardly mindful of the long-drawn-out line that followed always behind him; and to him it seemed a journey of

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companionship with the man that he loved always on his back, many times petting him, often talking to him—words he could not understand, but the spirit of which he could always feel. At times they passed over vast drifts of snow, and at times high up among aged peaks where the foot of man had as yet never come, and on and on, over the wilds of the American Rockies—moving westward, still westward, through deep, silent canyons, sometimes leading on around giant granite rocks and again over high, snowy wastes where the distant West lay hazy, strange, mysterious, silent and waiting, waiting. At last Tornado Boy, still patient, content, his eyes looking on all the world around him, walked out one morning on a level stretch of ground near the mouth of the Black Canyon.

The cattle had been started at daylight on this morning and had not been traveling more than two hours when they became noticeably slower than at any time since the drive had begun. All at once Jim turned in his saddle and signaled to Bill Cumberland to come up to the head of the herd. When Cumberland

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galloped up, Jim said, "Bill, we've not got far to go now, but I'm uncertain about which is the best trail beyond Cedar Valley until I ride on and investigate. If Otter Creek's up, we'll have to take the trail north."

"Just the thing, Jim," said Bill Cumberland. "The cattle are about played out anyway. You ride on and pick out the best trail and Bud and I will ride into Cedar Valley by four o'clock and see what you've found out. The boys can bring the cattle along slow, so as to get them there by sundown, and we can camp there for the night. What time can you be back in Cedar Valley?"

"Look, Bill!" said Jim, putting his field glasses to his eyes as Cumberland did the same. "See that tall, lone pine in the center of the valley? Well, Tornado Boy and I'll be there waiting for you and Bud when you come."

"Fine, Jim!" said Cumberland.
And with a smile and a wave of his hand,
Jim McDougal rode away.

Chapter XXI

THE BLUE BELLS

JIM rode away with Tornado Boy at an easy canter, and in the distance, as he came to a ridge, turned and waved; Bud Gorman, who sat his horse looking, waved his big hat in return.

Jim rode down the hill on the other side and for a long time kept Tornado Boy along the bottom of a small canyon. It was noon when he rode up on a low ridge overlooking Otter Creek. The creek was up from recent rains in the mountains. The north route must be taken. It was somewhat farther but that made little difference, now that they were nearing the end of the trail. Glad that all was ready for the last of the drive, Jim looked at his watch and turned Tornado Boy toward the little valley of the Cedar.

He rode into this valley about mid-afternoon, and after looking sharply in all directions, he said, as he patted Tornado Boy on

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the shoulder, "Bill and Bud are not here, Tornado Boy. You and I will have time to look around a little." And at this, the ever restless Jim rode slowly westward along the foothills. The sun was shining from a clear sky and only a gentle breeze stirred among the vast granite rocks and lonely pines. The reins hung loose on Tornado Boy's neck, and he picked his own way, walking slowly and, with his eyes alert, he seemed to be as much interested as Jim.

As Tornado Boy walked on, there seemed to be no sign of life other than himself and Jim, except once when a small gray bird flitted across an open space and disappeared in the shadow of some tall pines. An unusual silence held rocks and pines and grasses and the steady thump of Tornado Boy's hoofs contrasted strangely with the mountain stillness. But now came the droning sound of running water. It grew louder and louder and presently Jim found himself riding along a slope where he could see, here and there, a tall, lone pine and below a small stream murmur-

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ing and moaning between the rocky shores of a low, winding gorge.

There was something so pleasant about this spot that Jim sat and looked for a time,—looked at the high, snow-capped peaks to the north, at a heavy pine forest reaching up the slopes far to the west, and again at the stream below.

As Jim turned Tornado Boy to ride away from the place, he saw something that put a little thrill in him, as it had done once or twice before when he had been on the mountain trails. It was the swaying bloom of the flowers of the West, called the blue bells of Scotland. From a small boy, Jim had loved the wild flowers of the West and the ones he now saw had a strange fascination for him. He rode down to a point near the mountain stream, dismounted, and patting Tornado Boy a little, said, "Stand here, Boy. I must have the blue bells!"

The flowers hung in a beautiful cluster, swaying in charming grace from a crevice of the rock, but they were so near the stream that the water threw a fine spray over both the

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fragile stems and the blooms. But Jim McDougal had been born and raised in danger. He thought nothing of this. He had never yet laid his hands on the beautiful blue bells. Now, he would get them! With agile ease Jim quickly made his way along a narrow ledge just above the waters and carefully stepped down on a huge loose boulder, testing it cautiously by pushing with his foot to see if it would rock under him. As he did so he heard a shrill neigh from Tornado Boy, sounding high above the rushing water. Jim looked and was thrilled to see the beautiful blue horse looking at him and plainly calling to him.

"All right, Boy!" he shouted, and laughed in his delight at possessing the horse. He could depend on him; he had not been mistaken. "Coming soon, Boy!" Jim shouted.

Another step down and still another and Jim was so near the flowers he reached out eagerly to pluck the swaying bells, bending low as he reached. The chilling water threw a spray over his boots and hands, then as he bent nearer still toward the prize, the cold

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mist touched his face, but Jim McDougal laughed, reached out, grasped the blue bells and turned to go back. He set one foot upon a drenched, black rock and at the same time paused with his flowers uplifted to look at Tornado Boy. The horse had come as close to the cliff as he could. He was standing with his head up, his eyes ablaze with curiosity, and now he again neighed to Jim.

"Coming, Boy!" shouted Jim. "Coming!—got the flowers!" And Jim moved cautiously, picking his way back.

He was moving steadily nearer to Tornado Boy, who now stood close to the dangerous rocky trail, whinnying softly and lovingly as the young cowman drew nearer. All at once Jim's foot slipped on one of the slimy, black rocks and before he could recover himself, he lurched sidewise and fell—his right hand unconsciously still clutching the blue bells. Jim fell with the upper half of his body across some dangerous jagged rocks, his head grazing one of them, cutting an ugly wound. He lay unconscious with the blood trickling down upon the rocks.

Chapter XXII

THE FAITHFUL HEART

IT was late when Bill Cumberland and Bud Gorman reached the little valley of the Cedar. Evening was coming on. They fully expected to see Jim McDougal on Tornado Boy waiting for them, since they arrived much later than they had expected. As time passed and he did not come, they were puzzled. And when still more time passed and there was still no sign of Jim, they were troubled about this youthful trail leader. Jim had never deceived any one. He was not that kind, and in these adventurous days there were many things that could happen to a man and his horse.

The cattle were now winding their way into the little valley and in less than another hour they were all bedded down and the night watch took up their places, riding slowly around the herd. Cumberland and Gorman hobbled their horses but did not remove the saddles. They at once built a small fire, for

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the evening was chill and they knew that, as the darkness came on, the mountain night would be cold. The other cowboys rode up at intervals to greet Jim McDougal and Tornado Boy, and to express their surprise when they found they had not come. The horses moved about near by, grazing, and Bud and Bill sat by the fire eating some cold food they had taken from their saddlebags. Every now and then one of them would look up when he thought he heard a noise, and every minute they fully expected to see Jim McDougal come riding up.

As the time passed and there was no sign of him, the minds of these skilled cattlemen were more and more uneasy and they were ready for any sight or sound that might seem suspicious. Jim had said he would surely be at this place early in the afternoon of this day. As the two sat by the fire, Bill Cumberland said to Bud Gorman, "Bud, we'll have to wait until morning and if Jim does not show up we'll have to hold the cattle here while you and I hunt him."

Again they sat by the fire for several min-

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utes without speaking. Neither of them now had any desire for sleep. Then all at once, they both started as if they had been struck a blow. They heard the prolonged shrill neigh of a horse; it seemed far to the west. Instantly, both men got to their feet.

"What's a horse doing away out there in the mountains!" exclaimed Bill Cumberland sharply. "Who'd be camping in that rough place with a horse?" Both the saddle horses grazing near by raised their heads and looked wonderingly toward the wild mountains west of them. They, too, had heard the distant call of one of their kind.

As the men and the two horses stood listening, there again came that distant, prolonged neigh. The night was still, save for a breeze out of the west, and the sound of the call carried far down the foothills to the lonely pines in the valley.

Cumberland and Gorman, listening closely, knew that the horse was a considerable distance away, and they knew, also, that, although the sounds came to them not loudly, still the horse uttering them was putting all his power

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into the neigh, and both men believed that it was a call—one sent out possibly to other horses, certainly at least it was a call to something. They knew that horse language is limited to a few sounds, both low and loud. The distant horse wanted something and he was making this known in the only way he knew—neighing again and again, and still again as loudly as he could.

"Let's ride out in the hills there and see, Bud," said Bill Cumberland, at the same time feeling of his holster to make sure his revolver was in place. They mounted their horses, and riding past one of the night riders, they told him to tell the others of what was happening.

As they rode away Cumberland said, "Of course, it's possible the horse has strayed from some wagon outfit, yet I don't think he'd go up there alone."

They urged their horses into a trot for some distance. Again came the long-drawn-out, piercing neigh, much nearer, and it was now plainly moving farther toward the west. Both men strained their eyes to look out in the

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night, but although it was bright moonlight, they could at first see nothing. Then the keen eyes of Bill Cumberland saw a distant movement. "I'm sure I saw him, Bud," said Cumberland. "I believe he's seen us and is going back. I saw him pass over that ridge west of us."

When they had reached the top of the ridge, they could see the gorge and stream below. At the same time, the lone horse neighed again. The men pulled up their horses and the same thought flashed in their minds. Again came the neigh, so plain and clear, just down the slope. Neither of the men knew exactly why, but Bud Gorman put their thoughts in words. "It sounds to me exactly like Tornado Boy's loud nicker when he used to see Jim coming to meet him," said Gorman, "but maybe not."

Not knowing what was below them, they were cautious and hesitated, looking carefully first.

"We hear the horse so plainly, but I can't locate him. He must be among the rocks down there," said Bud Gorman.

They turned their horses down the slope

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which was dotted with scattering trees. The moon shone brightly and the shadows down the hillside loomed dark and lonely.

Again came the shrill neigh of the horse.

"I see him, Bill!" said Bud Gorman. "See his head above the rocks near the water! He's close to the stream there!"

While Bud spoke there came again the piercing neigh in the shadowy night, and the two men were now so near they could both see the head of the horse.

"Look, Bill!" said Bud Gorman. "It is Tornado Boy! See his white front leg!" and both men saw him. The trail was so narrow here that they rode down in single file, Bill Cumberland leading. They were now coming close to Tornado Boy. He had ceased neighing and stood with his head high, looking, waiting and whinnying anxiously as they approached.

At this juncture, the moon shone brightly on an unmistakably blue-colored horse with white stocking legs. Both saddle and bridle were on him. With a low nicker, he put out his nose toward the two men as they dis-

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mounted and picked their way among the rocks toward him, but he did not move away from his position.

As they came up and put their hands on Tornado Boy, they heard a groan. Both turned quickly and saw a man lying on the rocks near the stream below. They sprang to him.

"It's Jim!" cried Cumberland, bending down and raising Jim's head and shoulders. "Thank heaven, Bud, he's alive—get some water quick!" Swiftly Bud swept his big hat down in the water and as quickly they bathed Jim's slowly bleeding wound, and around his head they tied tightly a big red handkerchief, then again they bathed his face and head with the cold water.

"Oh," came a moan, and Jim's brain cleared. "Why, it's you, Bill—and Bud—Oh, what a fool I was—tried to get some of the blue bells here and fell." He put his hand to his head, "Guess I cut my head on the rocks. Tornado Boy—Bill, where is he —ah—I see him—at first I didn't know anything! I came to myself once and Tornado

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Boy had his nose over me—I remember that—I could see him walk up on the hill and nicker, then everything left me—but he's here—why, it's night! so late! I fell before dark—Bill! How did you and Bud find me—did you hear him?"

"Yes, Jim," said Cumberland slowly, "Bud and I heard Tornado Boy. We were puzzled when you did not come and we were down in the valley waiting when we heard a horse nicker away off here. We got on our horses and rode toward the sound. After we had gone a distance we heard him again and again, and we could tell that he was moving away from us and going toward the west. Bud and I are sure he saw us before we saw him, and when he was satisfied we were following he walked back to you here and he never stopped nickering until we were right up close to him. Then he talked to us by making low, friendly sounds. I guess if he hadn't let us know, we never would have found you, Jim, but the bleeding's stopped now. Don't you feel better?"

Jim did not answer. His face was pale as

THE FAITHFUL HEART

ashes, but he got up to his knees and as Tornado Boy came close and reached down his nose, Jim's hands went up on each side of the blue cheeks and emotion overcame him. He wept. Tornado Boy held very still. Bill Cumberland fumbled awkwardly at Tornado Boy's saddle. Bud Gorman stood looking seriously into the lonely West. Then Bill Cumberland put a kindly hand on Jim's shoulder and said, "Jim, it's cold out here; hadn't you better come on to the fire? Bud and I will help you." Jim's face was still very pale, but he got to his feet. Bill Cumberland and Bud Gorman helped him into the saddle, then mounting their own horses, they rode on either side of him and steadied him as they rode. Jim held to the saddle horn with his left hand, but his right hand pressed steadily on Tornado Boy near his flowing mane. It was not enough now to be on him — Jim wanted to feel him under his own hand. This seemed to make him a little nearer.

And Tornado Boy, with his eyes large and wondering, as always, walked between his two friends and their horses, a new sense of sat-

TORNADO BOY

isfaction in him. He could not understand quite the full meaning of it all, but he did know that somehow the man on his back was with those who were kind to him and that all was well.

THE END





About Thomas C. Hinkle

In the late '80's, a small boy named Tom Hinkle arrived in the hill country of eastern Kansas aboard a covered wagon with his mother and father. And it was here that he was to grow up as wild as the Indians who had lived there only a short time before him.

When Tom was seven years old, he and his father moved on farther west to Junction City, Kansas, where the Republican and Smoky Hill Rivers join forces. He spent his days swimming the rivers, learned to handle a horse with ease, and took a hand at raising the big, rough-coated wolfhounds that later his readers would come to know so well. There were times, too, when he and his friends rode out with the hounds onto the plains to track down wolves.

But one of the most exciting memories of Hinkle's boyhood was the day at Fort Riley when he saw the famous horse "Comanche," the only living thing to come out of Custer's Last Stand against Sitting Bull at Little Big Horn.

In later years Thomas Hinkle was not only a practicing physician but an ordained Congregational minister — and, last but not least, the author of stories that have captured the imagination of horse and dog enthusiasts everywhere. Each tale is filled with the excitement of action-packed adventure, and told against the background of the great plains and prairies of the West that Thomas Hinkle loved and knew so well.

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